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W~~A~~ PATHS IN ENGLIS~~H~~ POETRY

BY

ERIC DICKINSON



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of logically thinking, for they have heard of nothing and they know of nothing of the fruit of men's minds but are merely possessed of a fool-proof clerical efficiency. It may be said, hardly with any exaggeration, that this is the educational policy of India in 1930.*

But it is not the intention of the present writer to enter into this vexed field of polemic, fascinating though it is, he merely wishes to suggest that the present volume is a very earnest attempt to reveal to the Indian student that in those English studies, which he has perhaps come to regard with no too friendly eye, there are oases of rest and refreshment, possibly even of delight, and more particularly in the direction of that rather despised kingdom of poetry.

In England at the present moment the poetry exercise has become as common as the prose, because it was found that no proper understanding of poetry could be attained without practise in composition any more than in prose. This has recently been emphasised in a most interesting article in the *Nineteenth Century* for May 1929, on *Poetry for Preparatory Schools*, by Mr. Aubrey de Selincourt. I intend to quote from him freely in the course of what follows.

He says in the beginning, "All who are interested in the development of the theory and practice of education during recent years will have observed the increasing emphasis which is being laid upon the value, at all stages of a child's growth, of encouraging original creative work."

Is it too much to submit that with a very few exceptions the creative aspect either in prose or poetry has been ruled out, if indeed it has ever been thought of, in the

educational methods in India to-day ?

Yet another very significant sentence: "The mind," says Mr. de Selincourt, "must have food if it is to grow, and unless the food which is offered to it is acceptable it will be very promptly rejected."

Is it too much to suggest that to-day's meal for India's young mind is set before it in a distressing condition of toughness and tastelessness ? But is it so much the fault of the food or of the cooks ?

Mr. de Selincourt at any rate leaves us under no delusions as to what food he would place before his young people.

"Poetry," he says. "for school children should be 'simple, sensuous, passionate, as Milton required that all poetry should be. One need not trouble overmuch about its 'difficulty ;' for the difficulty of poetry is brought to it by the reader, and, if the poetry is good, the wiser the reader is, the more 'difficulty' will he find in it. There are some poets, no doubt, who by a merely superficial difficulty of style are unsuitable for children, such as Milton himself, though even in *Paradise Lost* there are thunders which a youthful ear can catch and wonder at, provided that the sound of them is not *dimmed by injudicious commentary....* To almost all normally intelligent children over the age of seven or eight (and to some even before that age) the appeal of the old Scottish and English ballads, with their bare, vivid, vigorous language and depth of dramatic feeling, will be far greater than that of the amiable John Gilpin; the nightmare loveliness, more potent than dreams, of *The Ancient Mariner* can cast its spell upon them; they will feel a stir, *however, dim their*

understanding of whence it comes, at the sense of earth's almost intolerable richness in some of the stanzas of Keat's *Nightingale* and *Autumn* odes, or at the sudden revelation of familiar aspects of the natural world, coming as they do so quietly and with such perfection of simple speech, in Tennyson when—for one instance among thousands—he speaks of the level lake and the 'long glories of the winter moon;' at the expression of deep emotion, whether of anger, or contempt, or love, as when Satan was hurled 'in hideous ruin and combustion down to bottomless perdition,' or when Whitman laments for his friend and leader 'fallen cold and dead.' That a child's understanding of such poetry is peculiar to itself, and in no way comparable to the adult understanding of poetry is, for all of us, not an activity of the intellect alone, but of the whole being, or of the spirit;

All that and much more is plain speaking and in that single reference to the power of the ballads we have arrived at a truth indeed. But we have arrived at it even more when the writer of the article concludes as follows:

"It is interesting to note that a number of anthologies for schools have appeared during recent years, which seem to show that their compilers are beginning to recognise that in the matter of poetry children are not such fools as they were once supposed to be. But many of them, I have observed are still defaced with too abundant notes, and a 'questionnaire.'

Just what significance that passage has for Indian education I will leave for the discretion of whatever teachers may so far have been interested enough to read this preface to determine. But apropos of the same matter

I recently came across this equally cryptic observation: "By the old system," the author is speaking of long since outworn methods of teaching in England, "the soul-shaking, breath-taking story of Macbeth is interrupted for the parsing of special passages, or a discussion as to whether the crow flies to Rook or to Rocky Woods."

"Children are not such fools as they were once supposed to be." And so Mr. Aubrey de Selincourt winds up his extremely suggestive and lively article on *Poetry for Preparatory Schools* in England. I am one who remains firmly convinced that Indian children at any rate are 'not such fools as they were once supposed to be.' But that by far too many in the teaching profession they are still considered fools I do not doubt.

"Catch 'em young" has been the motto of an educational colleague whose long understanding of Indian students' difficulties has been an inspiration to those with whom he works. Assuming this, and having caught them, surely it is for us to try and give them something of the spirit, something to help them *in the preservation of a sense of beauty above all*, for right growth will depend "upon its gradual and continuous broadening and deepening as the years go by, until it appears to the spirit in which it resides as something more than an immediate and delighted apprehension of the world about it, and is revealed in one of the main highways to truth. The young mind in which the innate sense of beauty is not crushed, as it is so often crushed, by unillumined teaching, will learn, as no other can, gradually to bear its necessary burden of increasing knowledge, which will itself be thereby irradiated."

By such a means as that shall we get a class to talk which hitherto has been dumb, we shall get it to laugh where before it has sighed, for much of the laughter and the beauty of the world it has not hitherto heard. Far too often there is no accord between the teacher and the class; and yet only by lively and happy co-operation can a mood be shared or a beauty divulged. But the student too should realize that it does not all rest with his teacher but that his own contribution is certainly not less important. Let him bethink him rather when he is in the quiet of his room in the inspiring words of that supreme poet of the human understanding—Walt Whitman:

Is reform needed ? Is it through *you* ?
 The greater the reform needed, the greater the
 Personality you need to accomplish it.

You ! do you not see how it would serve to have
 eyes, blood, complexion, clean and sweet ?

Do you not see how it would serve to have such a
 body and soul that when you enter the crowd an
 atmosphere of desire and command enters
 with you, and every one is impressed with
 your Personality ?

O the magnet ! the flesh over and over !
 Go, dear friend, if need be give up all else, and
 commence to-day to immure yourself to pluck,
 reality, self esteem, definiteness, elevatedness.
 Rest not till you rivet and publish yourself of your
 own personality.

Thus spoke America's greatest poet to those whom he would take for his disciples. To him who has achieved *personality*—the reward of the truest education—many doors are opened and he shall understand many things, nor shall the kingdom of poetry be the least. A final word about the scheme of the present book.

The writer has, in the case of every individual poem, tried to suggest avenues of thought and of discussion, but they are not intended to be more than hints as a basis for a new co-operative policy between teacher and taught, by the very nature of them therefore they cannot be exhaustive or exhausting but merely serve to start any reasonable train of enquiry as to how a given poet has succeeded in producing for us a piece of beauty, and having made such discovery sometimes to attempt an exercise in imitation.

The writer does not claim any kind of perfection for what he has attempted, but if it will have at all shown the way to others how to essay some sort of reform both in dealing with a class as well as with individual students he will feel that his task has been well worth the trouble. If again it shall have brought some students to see poetry as a thing of beauty and not as an examination task alone his efforts will not have gone in vain, for he believes he has understood intensely that '*a boy is a boy all the world over.*'

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NEW PATHS IN ENGLISH POETRY

SIGH NO MORE, LADIES.

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more;
Men were deceivers ever;
One foot in sea, and one on shore,
To one thing constant never:
Then sigh not so, but let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey nonny, nonny !

5

Sing no more ditties, sing no more
Of dumps so dull and heavy ;
The fraud of men was ever so,
Since summer first was leavy:
Then sigh not so, but let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey nonny, nonny !

10

15

SHAKESPEARE
1564—1616

Lines

8. A refrain whose words are nonsense but indicate good spirits.
10. **dumps**—miserable feelings.
12. **leavy**—since summer first put on her leaves.
25. **blithe and bonny**—look happy and glowing with health and prettiness.

SIGH NO MORE, LADIES.

The poem is a song from Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*. The plays are frequently sprinkled with these delightful care-free songs, fanciful, and musically as light as air. Some of the most famous are to be found in *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Tempest*. We see in some of these songs that sigh of passionate sadness for the all too hasty passage of the tyrant Time whose hour-glass so many of us would tilt so that it might flow no more. Eastern poetry has many such laments, notably in the pages of Omar, Hafiz, and Sa'di.

In the song we have here we discover an invitation to forget all sorrow: even though love has gone badly for us it is no use to brood on it. In essence its message is—draw yourselves out from your inner chambers into the pure light of day and sing 'Hey nonny, nonny !' For after all the woods of summer are not far, and the world has need of fun and jollity. So :

'be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey nonny, nonny !

Which is much the same in spirit as:

To-morrow is not: yesterday is spent:
To-day, O Sa'di, take thy heart's content :

HAYMAKERS, RAKERS.

Haymakers, rakers, reapers and mowers,

Wait on your summer-queen !

Dress up with musk-rose her eglantine bowers,

Daffodils strew the green !

Sing, dance and play,

5

'Tis holiday !

The sun does bravely shine

On our ears of corn.

Rich as a pearl

This is mine, this is mine, this is mine.

10

Let us die ere away they be borne.

Comes every girl,

Bow to our Sun, to our queen, and that fair one

Come to behold our sports.

Each bonny lass here is counted a rare one,

15

As those in prince's courts.

These and we

Line.

3. musk-rose—a fragrant species of rose.

eglantine—a name given to the sweet briar, and some other species of climbing rose

bowers—outdoor flowered arbours or retreats. Nearly all Elizabethan gardens possessed one and in the summer months they were the popular haunts of fair ladies and gallant gentlemen. The word here has an extended meaning and refers to the natural and beautiful retreats of the Summer Queen herself.

With country glee,
 Will teach the woods to resound,
 And the hills with echoes hollow. 20
 Skipping lambs
 Their bleating dams
 'Mongst kids shall trip it round;
 For joy thus our wenches we follow.

Wind jolly huntsmen, your neat bugles shrilly, 25
 Hounds make a lusty cry;
 Spring up, you falconers, partridges freely,
 Then let your brave hawks fly !

Horses amain,
 Over ridge, over plain, 30
 The dogs have the stag in chase:
 'Tis a sport to content a king.
 So ho ! ho ! through the skies
 How the proud bird flies,
 As sousing, kills with a grace ! 35
 Now the deer falls; hark ! how they ring.

DEKKER
 1570—1641.

Lines.

14—24. The spirit of frolic is abroad in this stanza and echoes with the happy glee of county life and of summer games and dances.

25. *wind*—to blow.

35. *sousing*—rush with speed downwards.

HAYMAKERS, RAKERS.

A poem that is an apostrophe to Summer; full of that rapturous and spontaneous expression that we have been led to associate with that happy time—so the poets tell us, when England was ‘Merry England;’ a time when the countryside was bathed in a fragrance of perpetual Spring or Summer and all the village greens echo to the May-time play of young and old.

Our poet lived at the same time as Shakespeare, and they must certainly have known one another in the London of Queen Elizabeth, most famous of English Queens and a contemporary of the Emperor Akbar. Dekker’s life was far from being a happy one and in his recklessness in money matters reminds us of that later and more famous poet Oliver Goldsmith.

But Dekker is justly famous for his supreme gift of song of which this is one of the happiest examples. Such songs as these were often written directly to music. The Elizabethans did not aim at subtle effects of thought as a little later became so much a fashion. Here we seem to listen to the freedom and fancy of the child mingling with its delicious laughter.

High spirits and gaiety, the constant charming away of ‘dull care’ seem the most earnest aim of these tuneful melodies, and many possess a hunting beauty of cadence we may look for in vain among some of our modern lyrics.

The poem concludes with a graphic and spirited picture of the zest of the chase, developed at the end with a masterly skill that never once allows the lyric impulse to fail.

THE MERRY COUNTRY LAD.

Who can live in heart so glad
As the merry country lad ?
Who upon a fair green balk
May at pleasure sit and walk,
And amid the azure skies
See the morning sun arise,
While he hears in every spring
How the birds do chirp and sing :
Or before the hounds in cry
See the hare go stealing by :
Or along the shallow brook,
Angling with a baited hook,
See the fishes leap and play
In a blessed sunny day :
Or to hear the partridge call
Till she have her covey all :
Or to see the subtle fox,
How the villain piles the box ;
After feeding on his prey,

5

10

15

Lines.

3. green balk—a green bank.
3. balk—the raised turf to divide different strips of land or different fields.
16. covey—a brood of young partridges.
18. plies the box—works carefully in the forest in search of his prey.

How he closely sneaks away 20
 Through the hedge and down the furrow
 Till he gets into his burrow:
 Then the bee to gather honey;
 And the little black-haired coney,
 On a bank for sunny place, 25
 With her forefeet wash her face,—
 Are not these, with thousands moe
 Than the courts of kings do know,
 The true pleasing spirit's sights
 That may breed true love's delights ? 30

BRETON
 1545 ?—1626.

Lines.

24. coney—young rabbit.
27. with thousands moe—are not these things *with thousands moe* better far than the courts of kings can know ?

THE MERRY COUNTRY LAD.

Yet another poem in praise of country pleasures and delights by a poet who has left us a considerable amount of verse marked by a similar freshness and charm.

What we should notice in this poem and that is absent in the other is the poet's shrewd powers of observation. He has by no means taken his walks in the country-side for nothing. Nature for him is not only enchanting but intimate and dear. But of all the sweet sights that he has found, that of young master 'coney' performing his morning toilet with a gravity that is immense, and a dignity that is secure, is the sweetest—(lines 24-25).

In England to-day schoolboys and girls make of poetry a game, and one kind of game is that of copying the old poets. Those of us in India who have ever been lucky enough to possess gardens ought to know the wonderful numbers of birds and other creatures that visit us. Of all Indian birds perhaps the most droll are the Mynas. I have seen a party of these perky young gentlemen early of a morning in the cold weather suddenly descend on the garden and lining up in two ranks face one another. They will then rustle their feathers and solemnly bow and scrape to each other for all the world as grandly as a party of mandarins under the eye of a Queen of China. Here then is a subject to your hand.

Sometime seek the quiet of a private or public garden and emulate old Nicholas Breton by making a few careful observations of the life about you, and then see if you can get it down in just such a simple and direct form as he has offered to us here. If it is easier write a short prose version first.

NYMPHIDIA.

THE COURT OF FAIRY.

Old Chaucer doth of Thopas tell,
Mad Rabelais of Pantagruel,
A later third of Dowsabel,

With such poor trifles playing:
Others the like have laboured at,
Some of this thing, and some of that,
And many of they know not what,
But that they must be saying.

5

Another sort there be, that will
Be talking of the Fairies still.
Nor never can they have their fill,
As they were wedded to them.

No tales of them their thirst can slake,
So much delight therein they take,
And some strange things they fain would make, 15
Knew they the way to do them.

10

15

Lines

1. Chaucer—the father of English poetry. Died 1400.
2. Rabelais—a Frenchman who mocked the abuses of his country in a remarkable work entitled: ‘The Lives, Heroic Deeds and Sayings of Gargantua and his Son Pantagruel.’

Then since no Muse hath been so bold,
Or of the later, or the old,
Those elvish secrets to unfold,

Which lie from others' reading; 20
My active Muse to light shall bring
The court of that proud Fairy King,
And tell there of the revelling:

Jove prosper my proceeding.

And thou, Nymphidia, gentle Fay,
Which, meeting me upon the way,
These secrets didst to me bewray,

Which now I am in telling.
My pretty, light, fantastic maid,
I here invoke thee to my aid, 30
That I may speak what thou hast said,
In numbers smoothly swelling.

This palace standeth in the air,
By necromancy placed there,
That it no tempests needs to fear,

Which way soe'er it blow it;
And somewhat southward tow'r'd the noon,
Whence lies a way up to the moon,
And thence the Fairy can as soon

Pass to the earth below it. 40

Line.

34. **necromancy**—sorcery or magic.

The walls of spiders' legs are made
Well morticed and finely laid;
He was the master of his trade

It curiously that builded;

The windows of the eyes of cats,
And for the roof, instead of slats,
Is covered with the skins of bats,

With moonshine that are glided.

* * * * *

But listen, and I shall you tell
A chance in Fairy that befell,
Which certainly may please some well,

In love and arms delighting:

Of Oberon that jealous grew
Of one of his own Fairy crew,
Too well, he feared, his Queen that knew,

His love but ill requiting.

Pigwiggen was this Fairy Knight,
One wondrous gracious in the sight
Of fair Queen Mab, which day and night

He amorously observed;

Which made King Oberon suspect,
His service took too good effect,
His sauciness, and often checked,

And could have wished him starved.

* * * * *

And as he runs he still doth cry:
"King Oberon, I thee defy,
And dare thee here in arms to try,
For my dear lady's honour:

Line.

46. slats—slates.

45

50

55

60

65

For that she is a queen right good,
 In whose defence I'll shed my blood,
 And that thou in this jealous mood
 Hast laid this slander on her."

70

And quickly arms him for the field,
 A little cockle-shell his shield.
 Which he could very bravely wield,
 Yet could it not be pierced;
 His spear a bent both stiff and strong,
 And well near of two inches long,
 The pile was of a horse-fly's tongue,
 Whose sharpness nought reversed.

75

80

And puts him on a coat of mail,
 Which was of a fish's scale,
 That when his foe should him assail,
 No point should be prevailing;
 His rapier was a hornet's sting,
 It was a very dangerous thing.
 For if he chanced to hurt the King,
 It would be long in healing.

85

His helmet was a beetle's head,
 Most horrible and full of dread,
 That able was to strike one dead,
 Yet it did well become him;
 And for a plume a horse's hair,
 Which, being tossed by the air,
 Had force to strike his foe with fear,
 And turn his weapon from him.

90

95

Himself he on an earwig set,
 Yet scarce he on his back could get,
 So oft and high he did curvet,
 Ere he himself could settle,
 He made him turn, and stop, and bound,
 To gallop, and to trot the round,
 He scarce could stand on any ground,
 He was so full of mettle.

100

When soon he met with Tomalin,
 One that a valiant knight had been,
 And to great Oberon of kin.

Quoth he: "Thou manly Fairy,
 Tell Oberon I come prepared,
 Then bid him stand upon his guard;
 This hand his baseness shall reward,
 Let him be ne'er so wary."

110

So like in arms these champions were.
 As they had been a very pair,
 So that a man would almost swear
 That either had been either.
 Their furious steeds began to neigh,
 That they were heard a mighty way,
 Their staves upon their rests they lay;
 Yet ere they flew together,

115

Their seconds minister an oath,
 Which was indifferent to them both,
 That on their knightly faith and troth
 No magic them supplied;

120

125

And sought them that they had no charms,
 Wherewith to work each other's harms,
 But came with simple open arms
 To have their causes tried.

Together furiously they ran, 130
 That to the ground came horse and man,
 The blood out of their helmets span,
 So sharp were their encounters;
 And though they to the earth were thrown,
 Yet quickly they regained their own, 135
 Such nimbleness was never shown,
 They were two gallant mounters.

When in a second course again,
 They forward came with might and main,
 Yet which had better of the twain, 140
 The seconds could not judge yet;
 Their shields were into pieces cleft,
 Their helmets from their heads were reft,
 And to defend them nothing left,
 These champions would not budge yet. 145

Away from them their staves they threw,
 Their cruel swords they quickly drew,
 And freshly they the fight renew,
 They every stroke redoubled;
 Which made Proserpine take heed, 150
 And make to them the greater speed,
 For fear lest they too much should bleed,
 Which wondrously her troubled.

When to the infernal Styx she goes,
She takes the fogs from thence that rose, 155
And in a bag doth them enclose,

When well she had them blended.
She hies her then to Lethe spring,
A bottle and thereof doth bring,
Wherewith she meant to work the thing, 160
Which only she intended.

Now Proserpine with Mab is gone
Unto the place where Oberon
And proud Pigwiggen, one to one.

Both to be slain were likely; 165
And there themselves they closely hide,
Because they would not be espide,
For Proserpine meant to decide
The matter very quickly.

And suddenly unites the poke,
Which out of it sent such a smoke,
As ready was them all to choke,

So grievous was the pother:
So that the knights each other lost,
And stood as still as any post. 175
Tomb Thumb nor Tomalin could boast
Themselves of any other.

Lines.

163. **Styx**—the river Styx dividing the kingdom of the living from Pluto's kingdom of the dead.
167. **Lethe**—the river of forgetfulness.
171. **Proserpine**—the queen of Hades.

But when the mist'gan somewhat cease,
Proserpina commandeth peace,
And that awhile they should release 180

Each other of their peril,
" Which here," quoth she, I do proclaim
To all, in dreadful Pluto's name,
That as ye will eschew his blame,
You let me hear the quarrel,

“ But here yourselves you must engage,”
Somewhat to cool your spleenish rage,
Your grievous thirst and to assage,
That first you drink this liquor,
Which shall your understandings clear,
As plainly shall to you appear,
Those things from me that you shall bear,
Conceiving much the quicker.”

This Lethe water, you must know,
The memory destroyeth so,
That of our weal, or of our woe,
 195
 It all remembrance blotted;
Of it nor can you ever think,
For they no sooner took this drink,
But nought into their brains could sink
 200
 Of what had them besotted.

King Oberon forgotten had,
That he for jealousy ran mad,
But of his Queen was wondrous glad,
And asked how they came thither.

Pigwiggen likewise doth forget,
 That he Queen Mab had ever met,
 Or that they were so hard beset,
 When they were found together.

Nor either of 'em both had thought
 That e'er they had each other sought,
 Much less that they a combat fought,

210

But such a dream were loathing.

Tom Thumb had got a little sup,
 And Tomalin sca'z kissed the cup,
 Yet had their brains so sure locked up,
 That they remembered nothing.

215

Queen Mab and her light maids the while
 Amongst themselves do closely smile,
 To see the King caught with this wile,

220

With one another jesting.

And to the Fairy court they went
 With mickle joy and merriment,
 Which thing was done with good intent,

And thus I left them feasting.

225

NYMPHIDIA.

Of all the poetry of 'escape,' or 'refuge,' none is so delightful as that which deals with Fairyland. Once, immortally, and for all time, Shakespeare gave us of it in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. In these days those who have won the secrets from Oberon's kingdom are fewer than ever, and at the best, excepting the inimitable Mr. Walter De La Mare, they seem to have lost the authentic touch, the spontaneity arising from belief in those little creatures of the fairy glades, down whose twilight avenues swagger the dainty knights, Tom Thumb, Pigwiggen, and their attendant, Puck, most mischievous of elves. But in Elizabethan days the friends of the elves were many and none so friendly as Master Michael Drayton, the friend of Shakespeare.

The Fairy Knight, Pigwiggen, has set all Fairyland in a fever, and made King Oberon absurdly jealous, for nothing less than that he has paid too many attentions to the Queen. Calamity can go no further than when the Queen agrees to meet Pigwiggen 'by mid-night in a cow-slip flower.' For this purpose Mab orders her—

"Chariot of a snail's fine shell
Which for the colours did excel,
The fair Queen Mab becoming well
So lively was the limning."

But they have reckoned without Oberon, and furiously he vows vengeance against the pair. In his frenzy he first belabours a wasp, then falls foul of a glow-worm,

anon, drives into a hive of bees; next bestriding an ant he makes an assault on a molehill. Finally he tumbles into a lake whence he escapes in an acorn cup. Then he sends Puck (Robin Goodfellow) to bring back the Queen alive or dead, but meanwhile, he prepares for combat with Pigwiggen. This combat you have here in Drayton's own words, the glow of his delicious fancy pervading all. Drayton's world is a true poet's world, a world that Pope and Horace Walpole would none of. To enjoy him we must be prepared to follow 'with him through the gates of Arcady into that old pastoral world where the lark's carol made chorus to fairy music.'

AGINCOURT.

(A.D. 1414).

Fair stood the wind for France
When we our sails advance,
Nor now to prove our chance
 Longer will tarry;
But putting to the main,
At Caux, the mouth of Seine,
With all his martial train
 Landed King Harry.

And taking many a fort,
Furnished in warlike sort,
 Marcheth towards Agincourt
 In happy hour;
Skirmishing day by day
With those that stopped his way,
Where the French general lay
 With all his power;

Which, in his height of pride,
King Henry to deride,
His ransom to provide
 To the king sending;

5

10

15

20

Line.

8. King Harry—King Henry V.

Which he neglects the while
 As from a nation vile,
 Yet with an angry smile
 Their fall portending.

And turning to his men, 25
 Quoth our brave Henry then,
 'Though they to one be ten,
 Be not amazed;
 Yet have we well begun,
 Battles so bravely won
 Have ever to the sun
 By fame been raised.

'And for myself,' quoth he,
 'This my full rest shall be:
 England ne'er mourn for me, 35
 Nor more esteem me;
 Victor I will remain
 Or on this earth lie slain,
 Never shall she sustain
 Loss to redeem me.

'Poitiers and Crecy tell,
 When most their pride did swell,
 Under our swords they fell,
 No less our skill is

Lines.

22. nation vile—feeling ran very high between France and England at this time.
24. portending—foreshadowing the future.
41. Poitiers and Crecy—two places where famous battles were fought. Crecy 1346; Poitiers 1356.

Than when our grandsire great, 45
 Claiming the regal seat,
 By many a warlike feat
 Lopped 'ie French lilies.'

The Duke of York so dread
 The eager vaward led; 50
 With the main Henry sped
 Amongst his henchmen.
 Exeter had the rear,
 A braver man not there;
 O Lord, how hot they were
 On the false Frenchmen ! 55

They now to fight are gone,
 Armour on armour shone,
 Drum now to drum did groan,
 To hear was wonder: 60
 That with the cries they make
 The very earth did shake;
 Trumpet to trumpet spake,
 Thunder to thunder.

Well it thine age became, 65
 O noble Erpingham,
 Which didst the signal aim
 To our hid forces !

Lines.

48. **French lilies**—the lilies were the national emblem of France and were to be found worn on their banners.
 50. **vaward**—vanward or front of the army.

When, from a meadow by,
 Like a storm suddenly
 The English archery
 Struck the French horses:

70

With Spanish yew so strong,
 Arrows a cloth-yard long,
 That like the serpents stung,
 Piercing the weather;
 None from his fellow starts,
 But, playing manly parts,
 And like true English hearts,
 Stuck close together.

75

80

When down their bows they threw,
 And forth their bilbos drew,
 And on the French they flew,
 Not one was tardy;
 Arms were from shoulders sent,
 Scalps to the teeth were rent,
 Down the French peasants went:
 Our men were hardly.

85

This while our noble King,
 His broad sword brandishing,
 Down the French host did ding
 As to o'erwhelm it;

90

Lines.

73. Spanish yew—an especially strong wood used in the making of boats.

82. bilbos—swords.

And many a deep wound lent,
 His arms with blood besprent,
 And many a cruel dent
 Bruised his helmet.

95

Gloucester, that Duke so good,
 Next of the royal blood,
 For famous England stood
 With his brave brother ;
 Clarence, in steel so bright,
 Though but a maiden knight,
 Yet in that furious fight
 Scarce such another.

100

Warwick in blood did wade,
 Oxford the foe invade,
 And cruel slaughter made
 Still as they ran up ;
 Suffolk his axe did ply,
 Beaumont and Willoughby
 Bare them right doughtily,
 Ferrers and Fanhope.

105

110

Upon Saint Crispin's day
 Fought was this noble fray,
 Which fame did not delay
 To England to carry.

115

Lines.

91. **ding**—a word now obsolete, meaning to dash or hurl.
 94. **besprent**—sprinkled over.

Oh, when shall English men
With such acts fill a pen !
Or England breed again
Such a King Harry ?

120

MICHAEL DRAYTON
1563—1631.

Line.

103. maiden knight—knight untried.

AGINCOURT.

Here is a poem that tells us a story, a story very famous in English history—the epic story of the battle of Agincourt. It should be noticed that in a narrative of this kind the poet can afford to waste no words, neither does he do so here but plunges directly into his tale, nor stops till he has told all that there is essentially to tell. His subject is a dramatic one, and this is the touch that he maintains with a spiritedness of diction and metre that sweeps all before it. The result is certainly a memorable poem and worthy of the subject which inspired it. We have to notice that the poet betrays a very keen sense of partisanship and he does not credit the enemy with any very chivalrous characteristics, but in spite of this we are made to feel that war on these terms is a fine adventure which in modern times it certainly is not. What a fine adventure it was the following little prose account may make still more clear.

Henry had quarrelled with the king of France about his French dominions, for a considerable portion of France was still under the English crown. No proper settlement being possible Henry decided on war and crossed over to France with a quite insignificant army—an adventure that seemed to many little short of madness. A council of war was held and many voted on their return. "No," said Henry, "we must first see, by God's help, a little more of this good land of France, which is all our own."

The French army was come up with on the evening of the 24th October—the position was such that retreat or flight was impossible to the little English army. The French in an overwhelming preponderance still hesitated

to attack and were waiting the arrival of further reinforcements.

Towards noon of the next day Henry gave the brief but cheering order—"Banners, advance!" At the same moment, Sir Thomas Erpingham, the commander of the archers, a knight grown grey with age and honour, threw his truncheon into the air, exclaiming—"Now, strike!" The distance between the two armies at this moment was little short of a mile. The English army moved on until within bow-shot of the French. Then the archers stuck their stakes in the ground before them and set up a tremendous cheer which was instantly echoed by the men concealed on the left flank of the French. The next thing the French knew was a tremendous shower of arrows both in front and flank. A moment of supreme crisis had arrived, for the French had few or no bowmen. They considered such a weapon unworthy of knightly hands, and the princes had insolently rejected the service of the burghers and other plebeians, holding that France ought to be defended only by gentlemen. But the French thought they could break the English archers and under a trusted leader a section of them charged with 1,200 horse, shouting their cry of "Montjoye St. Denis!" But the ground was soft and treacherous and before many moments had passed an overwhelming disaster had overtaken the proud French knights in their gorgeous panoply and armour, for the heavy horses weighed down infinitely more by their all steel riders sank sometimes up to their saddlegirths where they were rendered helpless and easy victims to the light clad

English archers and men-at-arms. The battle soon became a rout and before all was finished the finest flower of French chivalry had been cropped and 8,000 gentlemen, knights or squires, fell to rise no more. And this was the manner in which was fought the famous battle of Agincourt.

ROBIN GOODFELLOW'S SONG.

Round about, little ones, quick, quick and nimble;
In and out, wheel about, run, hop, or amble.
Join your hands lovingly; well done, musician!
Mirth keepth man in health, like a physician.
Elves, urchins, goblins all, and little fairies
That do filch, black and pinch maids of the dairies
Make a ring on this grass with your quick measures:
Tom shall play, and I'll sing, for all your pleasures.

Pinch and Patch, Gull and Grim, go you together,
For you can change your shapes like the weather;
Sib and Tib, Lick and Lull, you all have tricks too,
Little Tom Thumb that pipes shall go betwixt you.
Tom, tickle up thy pipes, till they be weary.
I will laugh, ho, ho, ho ! and make me merry.
Make a ring on this grass with your quick measures:
Tom shall play, I will sing, for all your pleasures.

The moon shines fair and bright, and the owl hollos;
Mortals now take their rests upon their pillows:
The bat's abroad likewise, and the night raven
Which doth use for to call men to death's heaven.
Now the mice peep abroad, and the cats take them:
Now do young wenches sleep till their dreams wake
them.

Make a ring on the grass with your quick measures:
Tom shall play, I will sing, for all your pleasures.

ANONYMOUS

Before 1600.

Line.

6. maids of the dairies—the milk-maids.

ROBIN GOODFELLOW'S SONG.

The words of this song you must suppose to be sung by Robin Goodfellow himself, and if you would know who he is you must understand that he is no less a famous personage than that mischievous little fairy Puck, whom Master Shakespeare has immortalised for us in his *Midsummer Night's Dream*. He belongs to the kingdom—

Where the wild thyme blows,
 Where oxlips and the nodding violet grow,
 Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
 With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine :

In Robin's song we have again another song of the open air and the sweet country-side while he invites us to join him at frolic:

Make a ring on this grass with your quick measures :
 Tom shall play, I will sing, for all your pleasures.

And the time at which we dance is when

The moon shines fair and bright, and the owl hollos ;
 Mortals now take their rests upon their pillows :

Puck's is a mischievous nature and the bewilderment of poor mortals is one of his chief delights, as we see in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* when he chides his victims with :

I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a round,
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through
brier :

Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,
A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire;
And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn.

But in our poem here we have his invitation to the fairy-dance under the moon. England is full of rich grass-green⁹ meadowlands and pastures, and if you walk abroad in such places you may come across the fairy-rings, a perfect ring of richer green and deeper grass. These the country folk will tell you have sprung up in a night after the amazing revels of the fairy-folk. Rich and varied are the secret stores of fairy legend and tale and that have descended from father to son, from mother to daughter, among the peasant folk of England as a precious and marvellous heritage to keep youth green, and age from thinking overmuch on the grave. And what is the most appropriate and happy time to think on such things? Puck would certainly tell you—on midsummer nights under the clear eye of the moon while mortals take their rest on their pillows, when the mice are out and the wary cat waits to pounce on them. It is the kingdom of fairy-land, that ideal kingdom that lives in the minds of poor people in all countries; and in the hearts of some it can never die.

THE CHARACTER OF A HAPPY LIFE.

How happy is he born or taught,
That serveth not another's will;
Whose armour is his honest thought,
And simple truth his highest skill;
Whose passions not his masters are. 5
Whose soul is still prepared for death,
United unto the world with care
Of princes' grace or vulgar breath;
Who envies none whom chance doth raise,
Or vice; who never understood 10
The deepest wounds are given by praise,
By rule of state, but not of good;
Who hath his life from rumours freed;
Whose conscience is his strong retreat;
Whose state can neither flatterers feed, 15
Nor ruins make accusers great;
Who God doth late and early pray,
More of his grace than goods to send,
And entertains the harmless day
With a well-chosen book or friend,— 20

15. Whose position is such flatterers cannot alter it nor
important enough for false accusers to tumble it down
for their own profit.

This man is free from servile bands
Of hope to rise or fear to fall;
Lord of himself, though not of lands;
And having nothing, yet hath all.

SIR H. WOTTON
1568—1639

Line.

21. servile bands—bands that keep a man absent from his true self and make him a hypocrite and a flatterer in order to gain his ends.

THE CHARACTER OF A HAPPY LIFE.

A poem written it would seem in intense reaction against the tyrannous and petty exactions demanded by a life at court. What in essence Sir Henry tells us is that it is far better to be lowly and to have few possessions and so remain captain of one's soul than to climb the ladder of preferment by the devious means of flattery and intrigue as is the way of courts. It is too costly a matter to expel truth from our hearts in order to attain the dignity of riches.

We see that the poem is very direct and is concerned with pointing the truth of its moral only. There is no attempt to decorate and dress up the thought in frills and graces. For the author to point his thought is sufficiently satisfying.

MY MIND TO ME A KINGDOM IS.

My mind to me a kingdom is,
Such present joys therein I find,
That it excels all other bliss
That earth affords or grows by kind.
Though much I want which most would have, 5
Yet still my mind forbids to crave.

No princely pomp, no wealthy store,
No force to win the victory,
No wily wit to salve a sore,
No shape to feed a loving eye. 10
To none of these I yield as thrall,
For why my mind doth serve for all.

I see how plenty suffers oft,
And hasty climbers soon do fall;
I see that those which are aloft 15
Mishap doth threaten most of all;
They get with toil, they keep with fear:
Such cares my mind could never bear.

Lines.

4. **kind**—all kinds of things.
9. **salve**—to heal a slight.
10. **shape**—handsome form.
13. **plenty**—opulence, riches.
15. **aloft**—those in high positions.

Content I live, this is my stay—
 I seek no more than may suffice;
 I press to bear no haughty sway;
 Look, what I lack my mind supplies:
 Lo ! thus I triumph like a king,
 Content with that my mind doth bring.

Some have too much, yet still do crave;
 I little have, and seek no more.
 They are but poor, though much they have,
 And I am rich with little store:
 They poor, I rich; they beg, I give;
 They lack, I leave; they pine, I live.

I laugh not at another's loss.
 I grudge not at another's gain;
 No worldly waves my mind can toss;
 My state at one doth still remain:
 I fear no foe, I fawn no friend;
 I loathe not life, nor dread my end.

Some weigh their pleasure by their lust,
 Their wisdom by their rage of will;
 Their treasure is their only trust,
 A cloaked craft their store of skill:
 But all the pleasure that I find
 Is to maintain a quiet mind.

Lines.

33. **worldly waves**—ups and downs of life's conflict.
 40. **cloaked craft**—concealed trick.

My wealth is health and perfect ease,
My conscience clear my choice defence;
I neither seek by bribes to please, 45
Nor by deceit to breed offence:
Thus do I live; thus will I die;
Would all did so as well as I !

DYER.
1545—1607.

Line.

44. clear—a clear conscience my best protection.

MY MIND TO ME A KINGDOM IS.

A poem interesting to compare with that of Sir Henry Wooton. Here again we see a poet reflecting on the vicissitudes and corruption in court life. Dyer advocates trust in the power and cultivation of the intellect —let it be our true kingdom, for once we have furnished it properly with a true understanding of what is good and beautiful we have a store of richness beyond price. As we read on into the poem we see what a very shrewd observer the author is, and in (lines 15-16) we are shewn how danger and misfortune can often dog the courtier's steps as a warning to others. The poet goes on to tell us that if he lacks anything his mind can supply the deficiency—for his imagination can furnish him with beautiful visions, while his intellect will serve to quieten and to discipline. Above all he is rich with little store. But perhaps the truest words in the whole poem can be found in (lines 41-42).

But all the pleasure that I find
Is to maintain a quiet mind.

To-day we are living in a restless age, passing in a whirl from sensation to sensation: we are dependent on others for our contentment and for our amusement to a degree that a gentleman of the sixteenth century would have laughed to scorn. Quietness and quietude breed quiet minds as Wordsworth of all the poets knew so well and has so truly shewn. If we never give ourselves time to meditate and reflect we shall never be strong in mind but on the other hand ever remain in a state of lamentable

confusion and drift of purpose. Perfect ease means perfect leisure, but suppose that we have found it, and then not know how to use it, then shall we indeed become as those against whom Dyer reads his lesson. The best purpose of an education should be to teach us how most profitably to use our leisure.

DEATH THE LEVELLER.

The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things;
There is no armour against Fate.

Death lays his icy hand on kings:
Sceptre and Crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

Some men with swords may reap the field.
And plant fresh laurels where they kill:
But their strong nerves at last must yield;
Early or late
They stoop to fate,
And must give up their murmuring breath
When they, pale captives, creep to death.
The garlands wither on your brow;

Lines.

1. blood and state—birth and position.
2. no armour—no defence against Fate.
9. reap the field—some men may seek victories to gain fresh glory where they kill.
16. garlands—crown of victory.

Then boast no more your mighty deeds !
Upon Death's purple altar now
See where the victor-victim bleeds.

Your heads must come
To the cold tomb:
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in their dust.

SHIRLEY
1596—1666.

Lines.

19. **victor-victim**—once the victor but now in turn the victim of death.
23-24. **actions-blossom**—Live eternally after them.

DEATH THE LEVELIER.

A poem expressing the old time-honoured truth that however wonderful power and glory may be they are things that cannot last: "Sultan after Sultan abides his pomp and goes his way," as Omar has told us.

The poem is rather oratorical in tone and reveals itself in such phrases as: 'Death lays his icy hands on kings:' 'Sceptre and crown must tumble down . . . :' 'Upon Death's purple altar now, see where the victor-victim bleeds.' It is manifestly a poem with a moral, summed up in the poet's concluding lines:

Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in their dust.

THOUGHTS IN A GARDEN.

How vainly men themselves amaze
To win the palm, the oak, or bays,
And in their incessant labours see
Crown'd from some single herb or tree,
Whose short and narrow-verged shade
Does prudently their toils upbraid ;
While all the flowers and trees do close
To weave the garlands of repose !

5

Fair Quiet, have I found thee here,
And Innocence thy sister dear ?
Mistaken long, I sought you then
In busy companies of men :
Your sacred plants, if here below,
Only among the plants will grow :
Society is all but rude
To this delicious solitude.

10

15

What wondrous life is this I lead !
Ripe apples drop about my head ;
The luscious clusters of the vine
Upon my mouth do crush their wine ;

20

Line.

2. bays—a variety of the laurel-tree which is ever green—winter and summer. To win laurels has come to signify renown, as in ancient Greece they garlanded the victors with a crown of laurels or bays.

The nectarine and curious peach
 Into my hands themselves do reach;
 Stumbling on melons, as I pass,
 Ensnared with flowers, I fall on grass.

Meanwhile the mind from pleasures less 25
 Withdraws into its happiness;
 The mind, that ocean where each kind
 Does straight its own resemblance find;
 Yet it creates, transcending these,
 Far other worlds, and other seas; 30
 Annihilating all that's made
 To a green thought in a green shade.

MARVELL
 1621—1678

Lines.

25. The mind withdraws from lesser pleasures into spheres of greater happiness and is here compared to an ocean whose creations reflect their own resemblances.
30. It does not end here however but creates other worlds and other seas beyond the world's limits—namely, in the brilliant world of 'the countries of the mind.'
- 31—33. In the end all these become as nothing beside the thought the garden carries within its green shadow. For the word green has come to take an extended meaning symbolising freshness, happiness, and the liveliness of thoughts that are beyond decay and death.

THOUGHTS IN A GARDEN.

This poem, it should first be noticed, is written in couplets carrying eight syllables to the line. This is a verse prescription famous in English poetry and some of the most remarkable poetry has been written in it, especially narrative poetry, or the poetry that tells a story. Here we find it used with an ease and polish that is something rather different to the earlier poems we have seen; as for example, *The Merry Country Lad*.

We have again the praise of the countryside, but the poet would emphasise particularly the deliciousness of solitude: what beauty he says can be won by us all if we will only allow ourselves to discover the secret happiness of solitude.

Here we have also in this poem the first evidences of the romantic spirit that later was to flourish under the banners of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Scott. We have it revealed here in a greater response to colour:

Ripe apples drop about my head;
 The luscious clusters of the vine
 Upon my mouth do crush their wine;
 The nectarine and curious peach
 Into my hands themselves do reach.

The whole verse in which that is found has positively a tropical richness, and at this particular time the eyes of young Englishmen were beginning to be much occupied with such scenes as these. We were to see its culmination in the romantic life of Robert Louis Stevenson with the

gorgeous background of his fair island of Samoa, the half savage inhabitants of which adored and loved him so, that when he died they took him to the top of a high mountain for burial: last final romantic situation and romantic scene. Marvell's concluding stanza is in praise of the power of imagination:

The mind
creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds, and other seas;
Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade.

REEDS OF INNOCENCE.

Piping down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child,
And he laughing said to me:
“ Pipe a song about a Lamb ! ” 5
So I piped with merry cheer.
“ Piper, pipe that song again ; ”
So I piped: he wept to hear.
“ Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe;
Sing thy songs of happy cheer ! ” 10
So I sung the same again
While he wept with joy to hear.
“ Piper, sit thee down and write
In a book that all may read.”
So he vanish’d from my sight; 15
And I pluck’d a hollow reed,
And I made a rural pen,
And I stain’d the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear. 20

BLAKE.
1757—1827

Line.

17. A rural pen—a pen that is full of the inspirations of the countryside, a source that has given so much to the poet we shall meet next—John Clare, and later, when we meet Wordsworth.

REEDS OF INNOCENCE.

The poet Blake lived in a century that more perhaps than anyone previous had put away the faculty of seeing visions and all the understanding of things that are not only concerned with the doings of the earth. The strange faculties that Blake possessed are by no means foreign to the East, for the Sufis, the Buddhist, and the Sannyasis, have left their record of communication with the things that are not of every day, in book, and sign, and symbol. The name generally given to denote these type of men is *mystic*, meaning something sacredly obscure or secret. In Indian poetry one of the best known names we associate with this idea is that of Kabir.

In the poem before us we have the quality of the emotion that we find closely allied to that of Wordsworth in his famous *Intimations of Immortality*—the knowledge born of the sense of the purity of childish innocence and joy. Blake ever remained a child to the end, that is to say with the lively imagination belonging to the state of childhood, united with an immense profundity of thought that made of him a being easily distinguished from his fellows. Some there were who did not hesitate to call him mad, but it was a divine madness. In addition to being a poet he was a painter and engraver and many of his visions of God and of things celestial have been interpreted for us as pictures.

In (line 5) we find the poet given his subject by the angel on the cloud. If we consider, what subject could have been better found that is so sweetly identical with innocence, goodness, and love, as this of the little lamb ?

The lamb has in Europe become a symbol for the boundless love of Christ and is scarcely ever absent from the religious pictures that Italy in the period of her artistic greatness has given to the Christian world.

LITTLE TROTTY WAGTAIL.

Little Trotty Wagtail, he went in the rain,
And twittering, tottering sideways he ne'er got
straight again.
He stooped to get a worm, and looked up to get a
fly,
And then he flew away ere his feathers they were
dry.

Little Trotty Wagtail, he waddled in the mud, 5
And left his little footmarks, trample where he
would.
He waddled in the water-pudge, and waggle went
his tail,
And chirrupt up his wings to dry upon the garden
rail.

Little Trotty Wagtail, you nimble all about,
And in the dimpling water-pudge you waddle in and
out; 10
Your home is nigh at hand, and in the warm pigsty,
So, Little Master Wagtail, I'll bid you good-bye.

Lines.

8. chirrupt up his wings—fluttered his wings, giving a
little song the while.
10. water-pudge—water-puddle.

HOME YEARNINGS.

Oh for that 'sweet, untroubled rest
That poets oft have sung !—
The babe upon its mother's breast,
The bird upon its young,
The heart asleep without a pain—
When shall I know that sleep again ?

5

When shall I be as I have been
Upon my mother's breast—
Sweet Nature's garb of verdant green
To woo to perfect rest—
Love in the meadow, field, and glen,
And in my native wilds again ?

10

The sheep within the fallow field,
The herd upon the green,
The larks that in the thistle shield,
And pipe from morn to e'en.
Oh ! for the pasture, fields, and fen.
When shall I see such rest again ?

15

I love the weeds along the fen,
More sweet than garden flowers,
For freedom haunts the humble glen
That blest my happiest hours.
Here prison injures health and me :
I love sweet freedom and the free,

20

The crows upon the swelling hills,
The cows upon the lea,
Sheep feeding by the pasture rills,
Are ever dear to me.
Because sweet freedom is their mate,
While I am lone and desolate.

25

30

I loved the winds when I was young,
When life was dear to me;
I loved the song which Nature sung,
Endearing liberty;
I loved the wood, the vale, the stream,
For there my boyhood used to dream.

35

There even toil itself was play;
'Twas pleasure e'en to weep,
'Twas joy to think of dreams by day,
The beautiful of sleep.
When shall I see the wood and plain,
And dream those happy dreams again ?

40

JOHN CLARE.
1793—1864.

Lines.

- 25. swelling hills—undulating hills.
- 37. There even toil—among those homely scenes work itself was pleasure.
- 40. the beautiful of sleep—joy to think of the beautiful dreams of night.

HOME YEARNINGS.

To understand properly these two poems we must know a little about the life of John Clare, and it is not all a happy story. He was born neither to comfort nor to riches but was brought into daily contact with the open sky and the beasts of the field, and became a farmer's boy. Quite early, however, he had a desire for food for his mind as well as for his body. Carefully therefore he husbanded his few pennies until one morning he went into the nearest town and paid someone to teach him to read and write, and so the avenues of newer beauties and greater delights became opened for him. One day he chanced again in the town and came upon a book there that was for him to be the most important book in the world, for through its pages he grew inspired to become a poet of Nature, it was *The Seasons* by Thompson. Now he began to write his own poems and was fortunate in securing a patron who encouraged him and helped him to publish his poems. So for some time life prospered with him, and he married and came to possess a farm of his own. Then came a day, however when his whole life was changed, and thereafter it was one long story of unhappiness and misfortune. Through some unfortunate speculation he lost all his money, and the shock was so great that he became a little light in the head. In those days eccentricity was not distinguished from madness, and so it came about that poor John Clare found himself put away in a mad-house.

And now here it is that we are able to read between the lines of *Home Yearnings* and understand what a

pathetic suffering this was that had been forced upon John Clare. Imagine what it must have been to be kept under forcible restraint, never more to be able to wander at will among the sweet fields and lanes; just what it all meant we can understand from his fourth stanza:

I love the weeds along the fen,
 More sweet than garden flowers,
 For freedom haunts the humble glen
 That blest my happiest hours:
 Here prison injures health and me:
 I love sweet freedom and the free.

The poet's powers of observation can be beautifully rendered thus :

The crows upon the swelling hills,
 The cows upon the lea,
 Sheep feeding by the pasture rills,
 Are ever dear to me.

What a tender and sincere soul do we not seem to hear in lines such as those ? It is not easy to interpret the outer beauty of life without the inner beauty of soul, for unless we possess something of this, beauty will pass us by, nor even so much as nod its head at us.

Surely this poem is a lament, the lament of one shut up within a house outside of which he is not allowed to go, a lament full of passionate love for nature's beauties and the intimate simplicity of things that are no more.

Little Trotty Wagtail reveals the poet in happier mood, taking delight in the revels of the bird-land world about him. Trotty Wagtail is the dainty little bird with her home nigh at hand in the warm pigsty. Trotty's cousin in his smart black coat and white shirt-front we may see in Indian gardens at that time when the *mali* is flooding our lawns and giving renewed life and freshness to all. Let this poem invite someone to write another about their own favourite little garden friend, whether it shall be Trotty's cousin or another.

IT IS NOT THE TEAR AT THIS MOMENT SHED.

It is not the tear at this moment shed,
When the cold turf has just been laid o'er him,
That can tell how beloved was the friend that's fled,
Or how deep in our hearts we deplore him:
'Tis the tear through many a long day wept, 5
'Tis life's whole path o'ershaded.
'Tis the one remembrance fondly kept
When all lighter griefs have faded.

Thus his memory, like some holy light,
Kept alive in our hearts will improve them, 10
For worth shall look fairer, and truth more bright,
When we think how he lived but to love them;
And as fresher flowers the sod perfume
Where buried saints are lying,
So our hearts shall borrow a sweetening bloom 15
From the image he left there dying.

THE LIGHT OF OTHER DAYS.

Oft, in the stilly night,
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Fond Memory brings the light
Of other days around me:
 The smiles, the tears
 Of boyhood's years, 5
 The words of love then spoken;
 The eyes that shone,
 Now dimm'd and gone,
The cheerful hearts now broken ! 10

Thus, in the stilly night,
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Sad Memory brings the light
Of other days around me.

When I remember all 15
 The friends, so link'd together,
I've seen around me fall
 Like leaves in wintry weather.
 I feel like one
 Who treads alone
Some banquet-hall deserted, 20
 Whose lights are fled,
 Whose garlands dead,
 And all but he departed !

Thus, in the stilly night, 25
Ere slumber's chain has bound me
Sad Memory brings the light
Of other days around me.

THOMAS MOORE.
1779—1852

THE LIGHT OF OTHER DAYS.

There is a monotony of beat about Moore's verse that has not endeared him to modern readers perhaps as much as he has deserved, but there is no mistaking its polish, ease and finish. For Indian readers he should ever hold a tender place since he has extolled the beauties of Kashmir as none other before or since. He was well paid for it however, receiving £3,000 from Messrs. Longmans. In those days poetry paid, for the publisher would be rash indeed who paid such a sum to-day. That poem was *Lalla Rookh* and the scenes opens in Delhi and Lahore and pass by easy stages *en route* for Kashmir. There are many beautiful passages, but they are marred by an insufficiency of pause and stress that gives an exceedingly artificial effect to the verses. But there is no gainsaying Moore's gift of landscape-painting as this specimen will serve to show:—

THE VALE OF CASHMERE.

Who has not heard of the Vale of Cashmere,
 With its roses the brightest that earth ever gave.
 Its temples and grottos and fountains clear
 As the love-lighted eyes that hang over their wave
 Oh ! to see it at sunset—when warm o'er the lake
 Its splendour at parting a summer eve throws
 Like a bride full of blushes, when lingering to take
 A last look at her mirror at night ere she goes !
 When the shrines through the foliage are gleaming half shown
 And each hallows the hour by some rites of its own.

This and the two poems we have selected show how Moore's metre is so unvaried that in the matter of prosody he belongs to the eighteenth century rather than the nineteenth.

THE VISION OF BELSHAZZAR.

I

The King was on his throne.
The Sat'aps throng'd the hall:
A thousand bright lamps shone
O'er, that high festival.
A thousand cups of gold.
In Judah deem'd divine—
Jehovah's vessels hold
The godless Heathen's wine !

5

II

In that same hour and hall,
The fingers of a hand
Came forth against the wall,
And wrote as if on sand.
The fingers of a man:—
A solitary hand
Along the letters ran,
And traced them like a wand.

10

15

Lines.

- 6 Judah—the biblical name given to Palestine and much used by the prophet Ezekiel and others.
7. Jehovah—the name of a god was known by the Jewish people.

III

The monarch saw, and shook,
 And bade no more rejoice;
 All bloodless wax'd his look,
 And tremulous his voice. 20
 'Let the men of lore appear.
 The wisest of the earth
 And expound the words of fear,
 Which mar our royal mirth.'

IV

Chaldea's seers are good, 25
 But here they have no skill.
 And unknown letters stood
 Untold and awful still.
 And Babel's men of age
 Are wise and deep in lore; 30
 But now they were not sage,
 They saw—but knew no more.

V

A captive in the land,
 A stranger and a youth,
 He heard the King's command. 35
 He saw the writing's truth.

Lines.

23. **expound**—interpret or make clear.
29. **Babel's man**—the old man of Babylon
34. **stranger and youth**—the prophet Daniel.

The lamps around were bright,
 The prophecy in view;
 He read it on that night,—
 The morrow proved it true.

40

VI

Belshazzar's grave is made,
 His kingdom pass'd away,
 He, in the balance weigh'd,
 Is light and worthless clay;
 The shroud his robe of state,
 His canopy of stone;
 The Mede is at his gate !
 The Persian on his throne !

45

BYRON
 1788—1824.

THE VISION OF BELSHAZZAR.

Byron is narrating here one of the most famous stories in biblical history, the story of Belshazzar, King of the Chaldeans. We are introduced in the opening stanza to the splendid banqueting-hall, and the king surrounded by his satraps, or governors of provinces. Then occurs the incident which has now passed as a proverb into the English language, for Belshazzar sees *the writing on the wall*, foretelling of doom to come. And all the Chaldean seers, and astrologers, and the Chaldeans were famed in such arts—are powerless to interpret that message. The young Jew, Daniel—‘of the children of captivity of Judah,’ whom the King’s father had brought as the spoil of one of his conquests—hears of the King’s dilemma, and he comes and interprets the writing. The last of the four words appearing on the wall was the Hebrew “*Upharsin*” and this Daniel interpreted as,—‘thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.’ Byron’s last stanza tells how the prophet’s words came true, for: “In that night was Belshazzar, the King of the Chaldeans slain, Darius the Medeian took the kingdom.”

Economy of narrative is practised here by Byron, and sticking closely to his originals from the Book of Daniel he tells the story neatly and dramatically.

TO A SKYLARK.

Hail to thee, blithe spirit !

Bird thou never wert—

That from heaven or near it

Pourest thy full heart

In profuse strains of unpremeditated art .

5

Higher still and higher

From the earth thou springest,

Like a cloud of fire :

The blue deep thou wingest,

And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest. 10

In the golden light'ning

Of the sunken sun

O'er which clouds are bright'ning.

Thou dost float and run,

Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun. 15

The pale purple even

Melts around thy flight;

Like a star of heaven,

In the broad daylight

Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight— 20

Line.

5. unpremeditated art—an art that is unconscious and marked by an entire absence of artifice.

Keen as are the arrows
 Of that silver sphere
 Whose intense lamp narrows
 On the white dawn clear,
 Until we hardly see we feel that it is there. 25

All the earth and air
 With thy voice is loud.
 As, when night is bare,
 From one lonely cloud
 The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is
 overflow'd. 30
 What thou art we know not;
 What is most like thee ?
 From rainbow clouds there flow not
 Drops so bright to see,
 As from thy presence showers a rain of melody:— 35

Like a poet hidden
 In the light of thought,
 Singing hymns unbidden
 Till the world is wrought
 To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not: 40

Like a high-born maiden
 In a palace tower,
 Soothing her love-laden

Line.

22. **that silver sphere**—refers to l. 18. Here the night sky
 and the arrows are the piercing light from the stars.

Soul in secret hour
 With music sweet as love, which overflows her
 bower: 45

Like a glow-worm golden
 In a dell of dew,
 Scattering un beholden
 Its aerial hue
 Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the
 view: 50

Like a rose embower'd
 In its own leaves,
 By warm winds deflower'd,
 Till the scent it gives
 Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-winged
 thieves: 55

Sound of vernal showers
 On the twinkling grass.
 Rain-awaken'd flowers—
 All that ever was
 Joyous and clear and fresh—thy music doth surpass. 60

Teach us, sprite or bird,
 What sweet thoughts are thine:
 I have never heard
 Praise of love or wine
 That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine. 65

Chorus hymneal,
 Or triumphant chaunt.
 Match'd with thine would be all
 But an empty vaunt—
 A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want. 70

What objects are the fountains
 Of the happy strain ?
 What fields, or waves, or mountains ?
 What shapes of sky or plain ?
 What love of thine own kind ? What ignorance of
 pain ? (1) 75

With thy clear keen joyance
 Langour cannot be:
 Shadow of annoyance
 Never came near thee:
 Thou lovest, but ne'er knew love's sad satiety. 80

Waking or asleep,
 Thou of death must deem
 Things more true and deep
 Than we mortals dream,
 Or how could thy notes flow in such crystal
 stream ? 85

Line.

80. love's sad satiety—love's sad fullness, for too much
 experience of love carries often with it the knowledge of
 pain and disillusion.

We look before and after,
 And pine for what is not:
 Our sincerest laughter
 With some pain is fraught.

Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest
 thought. 90

Yet, if we could scorn
 Hate and pride and fear,
 If we were things born
 Not to shed a tear.

I know not how they joy we ever should come near. 95

Better than all measures
 Of delightful sound,
 Better than all treasures
 That in books are found,

Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the
 ground ! 100

Teach me half the gladness
 That thy brain must know:
 Such harmonious madness
 From my lips would flow,
 The world should listen then, as I am listening
 now. 105

Lines.

90. **our sweetest songs**—know a sadness that the birds can never know.
93. **if we were things born**—not to experience sorrow we should have nothing relative with which to contrast the supreme joy of the bird.

TO A SKYLARK.

Shelley writes here of the skylark, a little bird whose home snuggles low down on the ripe earth of English grass-lands and cornfields. Its plumage is of the humblest and most unassuming kind like the sweet Indian 'Shama bird,' and blending with the earth's brown assumes a complete invisibility. The song of the lark is one of the most magical of all English birds, and is most remarkable for its sustained warbling, passionate, and unrestrained. Sometimes in the mean back streets of mediaeval cities, where the light of day filters all too seldom for benefit of the wretched inhabitants, even there you may hear this note and lifting your eyes be thrilled to find Hope's frail lilies are not yet put out of mind, nor God forborne his mercies. And this¹ was the bird that in Thomas Hardy's beautiful lines had—' moved a poet to prophecies ' and,



—Inspired a bard to win
Ecstatic heights in thought and rhyme.

¹ No praise, has ever been so just or so fitting as this of Shelley's. That confidant soaring into the empyrean of the little winged marvel was a subject most perfectly apprehended by the soul of the poet, whose powers—unconsciously—were equally capable of taking just such winged flights. No poet in English perhaps has so perfectly risen above things earthly, or possessed such powers to carry us with him into his universe of wonders and of powers incredible.

The music of this poem and the way Shelley gains

his effects will repay careful attention. It cannot be heard properly by merely glancing at the printed page but it should be spoken aloud—the one adequate test for all that is most worthy in poetry. Another thing to note carefully is the use of the epithets in this poem. Here they are chosen with astonishing and refreshing felicity: 'unpremeditated art; ' 'unbodied joy; ' 'lonely cloud; ' 'aerial hue; ' 'vernal showers; ' 'twinkling grass; ' 'harmonious madness; ' these are a few of the poet's riches. The handling of the epithet is the most difficult thing for the poet to master, and many have never achieved absolute perfection.

The use of simile is also rendered here, often with original and striking effect: 'like a star of heaven.' 'like a poet hidden in the light of thought; ' 'like a high-born maiden; ' and the rest we should take a delight in discovering for ourselves since on just such discoveries depend much of the true understanding and apprehension of the poet's world.

SPIRIT OF DELIGHT.

Rarely, rarely, comest thou,
Spirit of Delight !
Wherefore hast thou left me now
Many a day and night ?
Many a weary night and day
'Tis since thou art fled away.

5

How shall ever one like me
Win thee back again ?
With the joyous and the free
Thou wilt scoff at pain.
Spirit false ! thou hast forgot
All but those who need thee not.

10

As a lizard with the shade
Of a trembling leaf,
Thou with sorrow art dismay'd ;
Even the sighs of grief
Reproach thee, that thou art not near,
And reproach thou wilt not hear.

15

Let me set my mournful ditty
To a merry measure ;—
Thou wilt never come for pity,
Thou wilt come for pleasure ;—
Pity then will cut away
Those cruel wings, and thou wilt stay.

20

I love all that thou lovest, 25
 Spirit of Delight !
 The fresh Earth in new leaves drest
 And the starry night;
 Autumn evening, and the morn
 When the golden mists are born. 30

I love snow and all the forms
 Of the radiant frost;
 I love waves, and winds, and storms,
 Everything almost
 Which is Nature's and may be 35
 Untainted by man's misery.

I love tranquil solitude,
 And such society
 As is quiet, wise, and good.
 Between thee and me 40
 What diff'rence ? but thou dost possess
 The things I seek, not love them less.

I love Love—though he has wings,
 And like light can flee,
 And above all other things, 45
 Spirit, I love thee—
 Thou art love and life ! O come !
 Make once more my heart thy home !

SPIRIT OF DELIGHT.

Here we have an elaborately sustained personification of the emotion of delight. The poem opens with a complaint that Delight selfishly will only visit those who need him not, because they are already full of happiness. (Line 11). Delight cannot be wooed by sad persons, therefore let the poet dismiss his mood and recapture 'a merry measure.' (Line 20). Then we are told of the things that nourish and sustain the Spirit of Delight—the beauties of the changing seasons, everything which is Nature's and that has not known the taint of man's misery.

HYMN OF PAN.

From the forests and highlands
We come, we come !
From the river-girt islands,
Where loud waves are dumb
Listening to my sweet pipings,
The wind in the reeds and the rushes,
The bees on the bells of thyme,
The birds on the myrtle-bushes.
The cicale above in the lime,
And the lizards below in the grass,
Were as silent as ever old Timolus was.
Listening to my sweet pipings.

5

10

Lines.

4. When the river is calm.
9. An insect green in colour that settles upon the twigs of bushes and trees and is quite invisible even at a short distance. It makes a remarkable continuous chirping sound by the action of the wings. In form it resembles the grasshopper and the locust, and is very common in India both in the plains and the hills where especially its noise is most loudly persistent during the rainy months.
11. A mountain of Lydia in Asia Minor on whose slopes the vine grows 'in luxuriant profusion.

Liquid Peneus was flowing,
And all dark Tempe lay
In Pelion's shadow, outgrowing
The light of the dying day,
Speeded by my sweet pipings. 15
The Sileni, and Sylvans, and Fauns,
And the nymphs of the woods and waves,
To the edge of the moist river-lawns. 20
And the brink of the dewy caves,
And all that did then attend and follow
Were silent with love, as you now, Apollo,
With envy of my sweet pipings.

I sang of the dancing stars,
I sang of the daedal Earth,
And of Heaven—and the giant wars,
And Love, and Death, and Birth,— 25
And then I changed my pipings,—
Singing how down the vale of Menalus
30

Lines.

13. **Peneus**—a river in Thessaly rising in Mt. Pindus and passing through the valley of Tempe before reaching the sea.
14. **Tempe**—A beautiful and romantic valley whose scenery was a favourite subject of the Greek poets. Here Apollo chased Daphne, whose metamorphosis gave him the bay-leaf crown.
15. **Pelion**—a lofty range of mountains in Thessaly.
18. **Sileni**—the oldest people of the woods whom the Greeks identified with the rough and uncouth aspect of nature. They are half human, half beast.

I pursued a maiden and clasped a reed:
Gods and men, we are all deluded thus !

It breaks in our bosom and then we bleed :
All wept, as I think both ye now would.
If envy or age had not frozen your blood, 35
At the sorrow of my sweet pipings.

SHELLEY.
1792—1822.

HYMN OF PAN.

For lyric ardour and spontaneity of language there are few among Shelley's shorter poems to rival this one. His subject is one that has ever thrilled English poets—tales and fancies of the old gods of Greece. Of Pan and his magic pipes Robert Louis Stevenson has written in a beautiful essay, entitled, 'Pan's Pipes,' in *Virginibus Puerisque*. The legends and tales about the rustic god of shepherds are many and beautiful, but far the best is that told to us in the book of *Metamorphosis* of Ovid. There we are told that Pan loved a nymph of Arcadia by name Syrinx, and how on pursuing her one day to press his suit she fled away. Long and arduous was that chase, and then, when at last Pan thought that he had caught her, lo, what was his amazement to find that instead of her he held naught but marsh-reeds in his arms. As then he sighed with disappointment he heard the soft wind stirring in the reeds in his hands. Touched by this wonder, and charmed by the sweet tones, the god exclaimed. "This union, at last, I shall make with thee." And so the pipes, made of unequal reeds fitted together by a joining of wax, took and kept the name of the maiden.

Pan's form is half goat and half man, and he has come to be identified with all the powers of Nature, both in her quiet and unquiet moods.

THE SEVEN SISTERS.

Seven daughters had Lord Archibald
All children of one mother :
I could not say in one short day
What love they bore each other.

A garland of seven lilies wrought !
Seven sisters that together dwell ;
But he, bold knight as ever fought,
Their father, took of them no thought,
He loved the wars so well.
Sing, mournfully, Oh ! mournfully,
The solitude of Binnorie !

5

10

Fresh blows the wind, a western wind,
And from the shores of Erin,
Across the wave, a rover brave
To Binnorie is steering :

Right onward to the Scottish strand
The gallant ship is borne.

The warriors leap upon the land,
And hark ! the leader of the band
Hath blown his bugle horn.

Sing, mournfully, Oh ! mournfully,
The solitude of Binnorie !

15

20

Lines.

13. the shores of Erin—the shores of Ireland.
16. the Scottish strand—the Scottish shore.

Beside a grotto of their own,
With boughs above them closing,
The seven are laid, and in the shade
They lie like fawns reposing.
But now, upstarting with a fright
At noise of man and steed,
Away they fly to left, to right—
Of your fair household, father knight.
Methinks you take small heed !
Sing, mournfully, Oh ! mournfully,
The solitude of Binnorie !

Away the seven fair Campbells fly.
And, over hill and hollow,
With menace proud, and insult loud,
The youthful rovers follow.
Cried they, “Your father loves to roam :
Enough for him to find
The empty house when he comes home ;
For us your yellow ringlets comb,
For us be fair and kind !”
Sing, mournfully, Oh ! mournfully,
The solitude of Binnorie !

Some close behind, some side by side,
Like clouds in stormy weather,
They run, and cry, “ Nay, let us die,
And let us die together.”
A lake was near; the shore was steep;
There never foot had been;
They ran, and with a desperate leap

Together plunged into the deep.
 Nor ever more were seen.
 Sing, mournfully, oh ! mournfully,
 The solitude of Binnorie !

55

The stream that flows out of the lake,
 As through the glen it rambles,
 Repeats a moan o'er moss and stone,
 For those seven lovely Campbells.
 Seven little islands, green and bare,
 Have ^orisen out of the deep :
 The fishers say, those sisters fair
 By fairies are all buried there,
 And there together sleep.
 Sing, mournfully, Oh ! mournfully,
 The solitude of Binnorie !

60

65

THE SEVEN SISTERS.

Wordsworth has been called an economist in narrative. This poem shows him to the greatest advantage in narrative construction, and is well marked by his love for simple diction. Wordsworth has made use of a well known feature of the old ballad poetry—the refrain: *Sing, mournfully, Oh ! mournfully*, etc.

We find in this poem examples of that power of landscape-painting on which much of his fame must always rest. Here, however, the scene is not in his usual manner of brooding quietness but is fraught with dramatic action.

In the refrain we have a delightful re-echo of a ballad to be found in Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*:

“ Binnorie, O Binnorie
By the bonnie mill-dams of Binnorie.”

That Wordsworth knew of this is of course without question. he has only borrowed and transferred to his own needs.

The keynote of the poem is sounded in the refrain, and in one word above all—the word ‘mournfully.’

TO A SKYLARK.

Ethereal minstrel ! pilgrim of the sky !
Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound ?
Or, while thy wings aspire, are heart and eye
Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground ?
Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will, 5
Those quivering wings composed, that music still !
To the last point of vision, and beyond,
Mount, daring warbler ! that love-promoted strain
(Twixt thee and thine a never-failing bond)

Thrills not the less the bosom of the plain: 10
Yet might'st thou seem, proud privilege ! to sing
All independent of the leafy spring.
Leave to the nightingale her shady wood;
A privacy of glorious light is thine,
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood 15
Of harmony, with rapture more divine,
Type of the wise who soar, but never roam,
True to the kindred points of heaven and home !

WORDSWORTH
1770—1850.

Lines.

9. Twixt thee and thine—her offspring on the earth below.
18. kindred points—kindred because in each there is an element of the other.

TO A SKYLARK.

A comparison of this poem with Shelley's on the same subject shows firstly of course a radical difference —*form*. Shelley's poem sings for us but this does not. Shelley has adopted certain poetical devices to gain his effects and a careful comparison of the two poems should help you to discover them. Wordsworth's poem is a fine one, but the other is a masterpiece. Why is this ?

CHILDHOOD AND HIS VISITORS.

Once on a time, when sunny May
Was kissing up the April showers
I saw fair Childhood hard at play;
Upon a bank of blushing flowers;
Happy,—he knew not whence or how. 5
And smiling,—who could choose but love him ?
For not^a more glad than Childhood's brow
Was the blue heaven that beamed above him.

Old Time, in most appalling wrath,
That valley's green repose invaded; 10
The brooks grew dry upon his path,
The birds, were mute, the lilies faded.
But Time so swiftly winged his flight,
In haste a Grecian tomb to batter,
That Childhood watched his paper kite, 15
And knew just nothing of the matter.

With curling lip and glancing eye,
Guilt gazed upon the scene a minute,
But Childhood's glance of purity
Had such a holy spell within it, 20

Line.

14. to batter—to destroy.

That the dark demon to the air
 Spread forth again his baffled pinion,
 And hid his envy and despair,
 Self-tortured, in his own dominion.

Then stepped a gloomy phantom up, 25
 Pale, cypress-crowned, Night's awful daughter,
 And proffered him a fearful cup,
 Full to the brim of bitter water :
 Poor Childhood bade her tell her name,
 And when the beldame muttered "Sorrow" 30
 He said,—"Don't interrupt my game ;—
 I'll taste it, if I must, to-morrow."

The Muse of Pindus thither came,
 And wooed him with the softest numbers
 That ever scattered wealth and fame 35
 Upon a youthful poet's slumbers ;
 Though sweet the music of the lay,
 To Childhood it was all a riddle,
 And "Oh," he cried, "do send away
 That noisy woman with the fiddle." 40

Then Wisdom stole his bat and ball,
 And taught him, with most sage endeavour,
 Why bubbles rise, and acorns fall,
 And why no toy may last for ever :

Lines.

24. pinion—wing.
33. **Muse of Pindus**—meaning here the spirit of poetry. Pindus is a mountain in Thessaly and the seat of the Muses.
34. **softest numbers**—poetry of the softest and sweetest strain.

She talked of all the wondrous laws
Which Nature's open book discloses,
And Childhood, ere she made a pause
Was fast asleep among the roses.

Sleep on, sleep on—Oh Manhood's dreams
Are all of earthly pain or pleasure,
Of Glory's toils, Ambition's schemes,
Of cherished love, or hoarded treasure:
But to the couch where Childhood lies
A more delicious trance is given
Lit up by rays from Seraph-eyes,
And glimpses of remembered heaven !

W. MACKWORTH PRAED
1802—1839.

CHILDHOOD AND HIS VISITORS.

This poem is a delightful allegory on the happy state of childhood's innocence. English literature has always been rich in allegory some of the most famous are:—*The House of Fame*, *The Faerie Queen* in poetry; and in prose, *the Pilgrim's Progress*.

The subject here is the immunity of childhood from the various personages who would assail him—Time, Guilt, Sorrow and the Muse of Poetry.' Childhood treats his visitors in curtest fashion, while the Muse of Poetry is received with scant courtesy and her music found to be 'a riddle:'

And "Oh," he cried, "do send away
That noisy woman with the fiddle."

The verses move with a fine rhythm and it is interesting to notice that despite the demands of the metre how well the colloquial character is maintained, especially in the answer childhood gives.

BALLAD OF HUMAN LIFE.

When we were girl and boy together,
We tossed about the flowers
And wreathed the blushing hour
Into a posy green and sweet. 5
I sought the youngest, best,
And never was at rest
Till I had laid them at the fairy feet.
But the days of childhood they were fleet,
And the blooming sweet-briar breathed weather,
When we were boy and girl together. 10

Then we were lad and lass together,
And sought the kiss of night
Before we felt aright,
Sitting and singing soft and sweet. 15
The dearest thought of heart
With thee 'twas joy to part,
And the greater half was thine, as meet.
Still my eyelid's dewy, my veins they beat
At the starry summer-evening weather,
When we were lad and lass together. 20

Lines.

4. posy—a bunch of flowers for presentation.
16. to part—to share.

And we are man and wife together,
Although thy breast, once bold
With song, be closed and cold
Beneath flowers' roots and birds' light feet.
Yet sit I by thy gloom
And dissipate the gloom
With songs of loving faith and sorrow sweet.
And fate and darkling grave kind dreams to cheat,
That, while fair life, young hope, despair and death
are,
We're boy and girl, and lass and lad, and man and
wife together. 30

Lines.

28—30. and fate and darkling grave, etc.—that is, kind dreams keep away the fear of fate and the gloom of the grave, and while fair life, 'young hope, despair and death are about us we are still boy and girl, etc., together.

BALLAD OF HUMAN LIFE.

The poem—a usual characteristic of this poet—is tinged with melancholy. He shows us the three vital periods in man's life—childhood, youth, and age. The poet passes swiftly in the last stanza to the acknowledgment of loss of the one helpmate with whom his life had become intertwined. Yet not wholly will he admit this loss, but summoning memory to him he lives over again the past by making songs of loving faith and sorrow sweet. By the aid of kindly dreams, the blows of fate, the terrors of 'the darkling grave' are cheated of their power to harm, though fair life in childhood time, young hope in youth's proud day, despair and death in old age, are all truths and belong to reality. Yet with the summoning of these songs and dreams the poet and his departed love are still "boy and girl, and lass and lad, and man and wife together."

The stanzas are handled with a pleasing tunefulness, mastery and ease, yet possessing so varied an accent that we can only be astonished if we compare it with the stanzas of his contemporaries, Moore and Byron, where a certain refusal to admit variations of pause and stress renders to their verse an appearance often strained and artificial.

DREAM-PEDLARY.

If there were dreams to sell,
What would you buy ?
Some cost a passing bell;
Some light a sigh,
That shakes from Life's fresh crown
Only a rose-leaf down.

5

If there were dreams to sell,
Merry and sad to tell,
And the crier rung the bell,
What would you buy ?

10

A cottage lone and still,
With bowers nigh,
Shadowy, my woes to still,
Until I die.

Such pearl from Life's fresh crown
Fain would I shake me down.
Were dreams to have at will,
This would best heal my ill,
This would I buy.

15

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES.
1803—1849.

DREAM-PEDLARY.

The poet takes on the character of the wayside pedlar, a figure familiar in all countries, one who is always crying out the value of his goods, extolling, and cunningly appraising all he has, and rounding all with his familiar 'what d'ye lack, gentles, what d'ye lack, who'll buy, who'll buy !

Supposing the pedlar had dreams to sell: 'What would you buy ?' It is hinted that some are costly—'some cost a passing bell,' the tolling bell of death and the dreams that lead to the heights of worldly ambition, only to end too suddenly in death—a misfortune that overtook that great conqueror, Alexander of Macedon. But there are some dreams which help to dissipate our sighs, shaking a rose-leaf of beautiful vision down from life's crown. For our poet in his present mood there is only one dream in all the world that really matters, and that is:

A cottage lone and still,
 With bowers nigh,
 Shadowy, my woes to still,
 Until I die.

THE MASQUE OF BACCHUS.

Beneath my palm-trees, by the river side,
I sat a—weeping: in the whole world wide
There was no one to ask me why I wept—
And so I kept
Brimming the water-lily cups with tears
Cold as my fears.

5

'Beneath my palm-trees, by the river side.
I sat a—weeping: what enamour'd bride,
Cheated by shadowy wooer from the clouds
 But hides and shrouds
Beneath dark palm-trees by a river side ?

10

‘And as I sat, over the light blue hills
There came a noise of revellers: the rills
Into the wide stream came of purple hue—
 ‘Twas Bacchus and his crew !
The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrill
From kissing cymbals made a merry din—
 ‘Twas Bacchus and his kin !
Like to a moving vintage down they came.

15

Line

14. **Bacchus** corresponded to the Greek god of wine, *Iakchos* or Dionysus. He is essentially a god of the vintage and his festivities were held with unrestrained merriment at the time of the grape-gathering and straining off the wine.

Crown'd with green leaves, and faces all on flame;
All madly dancing through the pleasant valley, 20

To scare thee, Melancholy !

O then, O then, thou wast a simple name !

And I forgot thee, as the berried holly
By shepherds is forgotten, when in June,
Tall chestnuts keep away the sun and moon :— 25

I rush'd into the folly !

' Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,
Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,
With sidelong laughing ;

And little rills of crimson wine imbru'd 30
His plump white arms, and shoulders, enough white,
For Venus' pearly bite.

And near him rode Silenus on his ass,
Pelted with flowers as he on did pass

 Tipsily quaffing. 35

' Whence came ye, merry Damsels ! whence came ye,
So many, and so many, and such glee ?
Why have ye left your bowers desolate,
 Your lutes, and gentler fate ?

" We follow Bacchus ! Bacchus on the wing, 40
 A—conquering !

Lines.

30. *imbru'd*—drenched or moistened.

33. *Silens*—oldest of all the Satyrs in the train of Dionysus: regarded as his teacher-trainer and constant companion.

Bacchus, young Bacchus ! good or ill betide,
 We dance before him thorough kingdoms wide :—
 Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
 To our wild minstrelsy !”

45

‘ Whence came ye, jolly Satyrs ! whence came ye,
 So many, and so many, and such glee ?
 Why have ye left your forest haunts, why left
 Your nuts in oak-tree cleft ?—

“ For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree; 50
 For wine we left our heath, and yellow brooms,
 And cold mushrooms;
 For wine we follow Bacchus through the earth;
 Great god of breathless cups and chirping mirth !
 Come hither, lady fair, and joined be 55
 To our mad minstrelsy !”

‘ Over wide streams and mountains great we went,
 And, save when Bacchus kept his ivy tent,
 Onward the tiger and the leopard pants,
 With Asian elephants : 60

Onward these myriads—with song and dance,
 With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians’ prance,
 Web-footed alligators, crocodiles,
 Bearing upon their scaly backs, in files,
 Plump infant laughers mimicking the coil 65
 Of seamen, and stout galley-rowers’ toil :
 With toying oars and silken sails they glide,
 Nor care for wind and tide.

‘ Mounted on panthers’ furs and lions’ manes,
From rear to van they scour about the plains; 70
A three days’ journey in a moment done;
And always, at the rising of the sun,
About the wilds they hunt with spear and horn,
 On spleenful unicorn.

‘ I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown 75
 Before the vine-wreath crown !
I saw parch’d Abyssinia rouse and sing
 To the silver cymbals’ ring !
I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce
 Old Tartary the fierce ! 80

The kings of Ind their jewel sceptres vail,
And from their treasures scatter pearléd hail;
Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans,
 And all his priesthood moans,
Before yðung Bacchus’ eye-wink turning pale. 85
Into these regions came I, following him,
Sick-hearted, weary—so I took a whim
To stray away into these forests drear,
 Alone, without a peer :
And I have told thee all thou mayest hear. 90

Lines.

74. **spleenful unicorn**—angry or fretful unicorn. According to ancient writers the unicorn—a fabulous animal shaped like a horse and with a horn straight from its forehead—was an inhabitant of India.
75. **Osirian Egypt**—the Egyptian god of the dead.
- .81. **vail**—let fall.

THE MASQUE OF BACCHUS.

The poem of Keats, of which this is a fragment, is one of the most beautiful recreations of classic myth in the English language. It deals with the myth of Endymion, the comely young shepherd on whom Zeus had bestowed the gift of eternal youth and eternal life in the form of unbroken slumber on Mount Latmos. Here Cynthia, the moon, descended every night from heaven to visit and embrace the beautiful sleeper in his grotto. From such material Keats has made a wonderful narrative poem in four books. The poem is not of equal merit throughout, but in it may be found passages of great beauty. Its opening lines are famous:

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever
 Its loveliness increases; it will never
 Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
 A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
 Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breath-
 ing.

The Masque of Bacchus—as has been chosen to name it—is one of the supremely lovely passages in this poem, whether considered musically, or pictorially and it reminds us as much of a painter as a poet, a characteristic of the romantic power of vision.

The episode opens quietly enough, with scarcely a hint of the greater harmonies to follow, or the magnificent splashes of colour and movement we see in Bacchus and his pomp.

The only possible comparison in Indian legend and myth to the ceremonies attending the feast of Bacchus are those of Krishna, which we may behold to-day in the sadly depleted glories and significance of the ancient Holi festival.

First the poet introduces us to the picture of his unhappy maiden, lonely and weeping beneath the dark palm-trees by the river side, but we are given no sort of preparation for the amazing thing that suddenly bursts upon us, for :—

Over the light blue hills
There came a noise of revellers:

Then what a feast of animated colour are we not given now in one of the loveliest pieces of word-painting since the poet Spenser ?

‘ Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,
Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,
With sidelong laughing;
And little rills of crimson wine imbruued
His plump white arms, and shoulders, enough white
For Venus’ pearly bite;
And near him rode Silenus on his ass,
Pelted with flowers as he on did pass
Tipsily quaffing.

Compelled by the strange magic of that mad rout
the maiden joins in the dance and :

‘ Over wide streams and mountains great we went
And, some where Bacchus kept his ivy tent,
Onward the tiger and the leopard pants,
With Asian elephants.

As part of the stories connected with Dionysus was one of how he visited India and compelled the people of that country to his will, and in works of art he is sometimes represented as the ancient Indian Dionysus, the conqueror of the East. Is it not perhaps here that the Krishna and Bacchus legends may have mingled ?

ROBIN HOOD.

To A FRIEND.

No ! those days are gone away,
And their hours are old and gray,
And their minutes buried all
Under the down-trodden pall
Of the leaves of many years :
Many times have Winter's shears,
Frozen North, and chilling East,
Sounded tempests to the feast
Of the forest's whispering fleeces,
Since men knew nor rent nor leases.

5

10

No, the bugle sounds no more,
And the twanging bow no more;
Silent is the ivory shrill
Past the heath and up the hill;
There is no mid-forest laugh,
Where lone Echo gives the half
To some wight, amazed to hear
Jesting, deep in forest drear.

15

Lines.

4. pall—covering, usually the cloth used to drape a coffin.
6. shears—scissors of a large kind used in gardening for clipping.
10. rent nor leases—since the time such things were unknown as there were no houses.
17. wight—a person.

On the fairest time of June
 You may go, with sun or moon,
 Or the seven stars to light you,
 Or the polar ray to right you;
 But you never may behold
 Little John, or Robin bold;
 Never one, of all the clan,
 Thrumming on an empty can
 Some old hunting ditty, while
 He doth his green way beguile
 To fair hostess Merriment,
 Down beside the pasture Trent;
 For he left the merry tale,
 Messenger for spicy ale.

20

25

30

Gone the merry morris-din;
 Gone, the song of Gamelyn.
 Gone, the tough-belted outlaw
 Idling in the 'greene shawe;'
 All are gone away and past !
 And if Robin should be cast

35

Lines.

24. Little John—a famous member of Robin Hood's band.
30. Trent—pasture, or grass land beside the river Trent.
33. morris-din—morris-dance, a favourite country-dance of the Elizabethans performed by a troop of persons usually in the open air.
34. song of Gamelyn—another of the old ballads of a similar kind to those of Robin Hood and probably written about 1350.
36. greene shawe—green thicket or small wood.

Sudden from his tufted grave,
 And if Marian should have
 Once again her forest days,
 She would weep, and he would craze;
 He would swear, for all his oaks,
 Fall'n beneath the dock-yard strokes,
 Have rotted on the briny seas;
 She would weep that her wild bees
 Sang not to her—strange ! that honey
 Can't be~~g~~ot without hard money !

40

So it is; yet let us sing
 Honour to the old bow-string !
 Honour to the bugle-horn !
 Honour to the woods unshorn !
 Honour to the Lincoln green !
 Honour to the archer keen !
 Honour to tight Little John,
 And the horse he rode upon !
 Honour to bold Robin Hood,
 Sleeping in the underwood :
 Honour to Maid Marian,
 And to all the Sherwood clan !
 Though their days have hurried by,
 Let us too a burden try.

50

55

60

KEATS
 1795—1821.

Lines.

53. Lincoln green—a homespun serviceable cloth of a colour made famous by Robin and his merry men.
 62. burden—a song.

ROBIN HOOD.

A delightfully pleasing lament of the past glories of romantic outlawry. The fancy of the poet dwells affectionately and lingeringly upon that past time with felicitous and charming touches of colour and allusion. It is Keats in a playfully wistful mood, compelling and tender.

LADY CLARE.

It was the time when lilies blow,
And clouds are highest up in air,
Lord Ronald brought a lily-white doe
To give his cousin, Lady Clare,

I trow⁵ they did not part in scorn:
Lovers long betroth'd were they:
They two will wed the morrow morn:
God's blessing on the day !

“He does not love me for my birth,
Nor for my lands so broad and fair;
He loves me for my own true worth,
And that is well,” said Lady Clare. 10

In there came old Alice the nurse,
Said, “Who was this that went from thee ?”
“It was my cousin,” said Lady Clare, 15
“Tomorrow he weds with me.”

“O God be thank'd !” said Alice the nurse,
“That all comes round so just and fair:
Lord Ronald is heir of all your lands,
And you are not the Lady Clare.” 20

Line 5. I trow—I believe or think.

“Are ye out of your mind, my nurse, my nurse,”

Said Lady Clare, “that ye speak so wild ?”

“As God’s above,” said Alice the nurse,

“I speak the truth: you are my child.

“The old Earl’s daughter died at my breast; 25

I speak the truth, as I live by bread !

I buried her like my own sweet child,

And put my child in her stead.”

“Falsely, falsely, have ye done,

O mother,” she said, “if this be true,

To keep the best man under the sun

So many years from his due.”

30

“Nay, now, my child,” said Alice the nurse,

“But keep the secret for your life,

And all you have will be Lord Ronald’s,

When you are man and wife.”

35

“If I’m a beggar born,” she said,

“I will speak out, for I dare not lie,

Pull off, pull off the brooch of gold,

And fling the diamond necklace by.”

40

“Nay now, my child,” said Alice the nurse,

“But keep the secret all ye can.”

She said, “Not so: but I will know

If there be any faith in man.”

" Nay now, what faith," said Alice the nurse, 45

" The man will cleave unto his right."

" And he shall have it," the lady replied,

" Tho' I should die to-night."

" Yet give one kiss to your mother dear !

" Alas ! my child, I sinn'd for thee."

" O mother, mother, mother," she said,

" So strange it seems to me."

" Yet here's a kiss for my mother dear,
My mother dear, if this be so,

And lay your hand upon my head,

And bless me, mother, ere I go."

50

55

She clad herself in a russet gown,

She was no longer Lady Clare :

She went by dale, and she went by down,

With a single rose in her hair.

60

The lily-white doe Lord Ronald had brought

Leapt up from where she lay,

Dropt her head in the maiden's hand

And follow'd her all the way.

Down stept Lord Ronald from his tower :

65

" O Lady Clare, you shame your worth !

Why come you drest like a village maid,

That are the flower of the earth ? "

“If I come drest like a village maid,
I am but as my fortunes are: 70

I am a beggar born,” she said,
“And not the Lady Clare.”

“Play me no tricks,” said Lord Ronald,
“For I am yours in word and in deed.

“Play me no tricks,” said Lord Ronald, 75
“Your riddle is hard to read.”

O and proudly stood she up !
Her heart within her did not fail:
She look'd into Lord Ronald's eyes,
And told him all her nurse's tale. 80

He laugh'd a laugh of merry scorn;
He turn'd and kiss'd her where 'she stood:
“If you are not the heiress born,
And I, “said he,” the next in blood—

If you are not the heiress born, 85
And I, “said he,” the lawful heir,
We two will wed to-morrow morn,
And you shall still be Lady Clare.”

TENNYSON
1809—1892.

LADY CLARE.

Another poem modelled closely on the old ballads. We are plunged directly into a story and the poet pops out a surprise for us as early as the fifth stanza:—

‘ O God be thanked ! ’ said Alice the nurse,
“ That all comes round so just and fair
Lord Ronald is heir to all your lands,
And you are not the Lady Clare.”

In ‘ *Lady Clare* ’ we have an early example of Tennyson’s interest in the ballad form. It would form an attractive and profitable study to compare this ballad with the later *Lady of Shallott*, noting down carefully the difference of treatment that can be discovered.

THE LOST LEADER.

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
Lost all the others she lets us devote;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver, 5
So much was theirs who so little allowed:
How all our copper had gone for his service !
Rags—were they purple, his heart had been
proud !
We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured
him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye, 10
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
Made him our pattern to live and to die !
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from
their graves !
He alone breaks from the van of the free-men, 15
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves !

Lines.

2. a **riband**—a decoration bestowed as a mark of honour by the government of a country for distinguished services.
5. **doled out**—to give an act of charity.
13. **Shakespeare, Milton, etc.**—the English poets most associated in his mind with the democratic ideal.

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence;
 Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre.
 Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
 Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire: 20
 Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
 One task more declined, one more footpath un-
 trod,

One more triumph for devils and sorrow for angels,
 One wrong more to man, one more insult to God !
 Life's night begins: let him never come back to
 us !¹³ 25

There would be doubt, hesitation, and pain,
 Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,
 Never glad confident morning again !
 Best fight on well, for we taught him,—strike
 gallantly,
 Menace our heart ere we master his own; 30
 Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
 Pardoned in Heaven, the first by the throne !

THE LOST LEADER.

Browning is interested here in giving us the effect produced on a group of ardent and enthusiastic young men by the apostasy of a leader. We are meant to imagine the words as revealed to them by the spokesman of their party. The state of feeling is well brought out and the quality of the emotion in such lines as:

We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured
him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents
Made him our pattern to live and to die !

And the state of disillusion:—

Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath un-
trod,
One more triumph for devils and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God !

Sitting words and bitter ! Browning is a master at getting into the hearts of his characters and is justly famous for a type of poem which he made peculiarly his own—dramatic monologue—of which this is one of the shortest specimens. It is dramatic by the nature of its passionate conflict and revulsion of feeling, from which the bitterness cannot be concealed.

Life's night begins: let him never come back to us.

For if he did there would be doubt, hesitation, and pain, forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight, never glad confident morning again.

EVELYN HOPE.

Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead !

Sit and watch by her side an hour.

That is her book-shelf, this her bed;

She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass;

5

Little has yet been changed, I think:

The shutters are shut, no light may pass

Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

Sixteen years old when she died !

Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name;

10

It was not her time to love; beside,

Her life had many a hope and aim,
Duties enough and little cares,

And now was quiet, now astir,
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,

15

And the sweet white brow is all of her.

Lines.

11. it was not her time to love—she was too young yet to know of love, its beauty and its pain.
14. and now was quiet, now astir—sometimes his life moved in smooth and quiet places, at others was kindler to enthusiasms and to take an active part in affairs about her.
15. till God's hand beckoned unawares—till death caught her unexpectedly.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope ?

What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire and dew—
And just because I was twice as old
And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
Each was nought to each, must I be told ?
We were fellow mortals, nought beside ?

No, indeed ! for God above
Is great to grant, as mighty to make..
And creates the love to reward the love :
I claim you still for my own love's sake !

Lines.

19. the good stars—the stars whose influence went to shaping the virtue of her character.
20. spirit, fire and dew—the qualities suggesting, as being elementals—the purity and innocence of her character.
- 23—25. The time will come when the meaning of the repose of your body in the lower earth through the long years will be revealed. I shall divine the significance of these, your beauties and what your behaviour to me would be in the life hereafter that comes in the old ones' stead.
Herein we find Browning clearly revealing his confidence, faith, and gladness in his knowledge of the perfection of the life hereafter.
- 27—28. God has given us love that we may offer it to others, and I claim you just because I have loved you, and if there is any truth in God's laws you will return my love.

Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
 Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few: 30
 Much is to learn, much to forget
 Ere the time be come for taking you.

But the time will come—at last it will,
 When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)
 In the lower earth, in the years long still, 35
 That body and soul so pure and gay ?
 Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
 And your mouth of your own geranium's red—
 And what you would do with me, in fine,
 In the new life come in the old one's stead. 40

I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,
 Given up myself so many times.
 Gained me the gains of various men,
 Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;
 Yet one thing, one in my soul's full scope, 45
 Either I missed or itself missed me:
 And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope !
 What is the issue ? let us see !

Lines.

29. Browning refers here to the soul's endless flight and the transformations it undergoes in different worlds, reaching perfection as it enters the precincts of Heaven.

33—45. The poet has had a life filled with a variety of experience, but love had always passed him bye.

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while.

My heart seemed full as it could hold 50
There was place and to spare for the frank young
smile,

And the red young mouth, and the hair's young
gold.

So, hush—I will give you this leaf to keep:

See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand !
There, that is our secret: go to sleep ! 55

You will wake, and remember, and understand !

EVELYN HOPE.

One of the loveliest of the love lyrics of Robert Browning, moving with a sweetness and beauty of rhythm generally supposed to be such an absent quality in his verse. Exquisitely wistful the poem is a lament over the flower-like beauty of a child of sixteen all too soon visited by the chill Angel of Death. There is a charming and sweetly poignant surprise in the last final lines.

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN.

A CHILD'S STORY.

I

Hamelin Town's in Brunswick,
By famous Hanover city;
The river Weser, deep and wide,
Washes its walls on the southern side;
A pleasanter spot you never spied.

5

But, when begins my ditty,
Almost five hundred years ago,
To see the townsfolk suffer so
From vermin, was a pity.

II

Rats !

They fought the dogs, and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles.
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spoiled the women's chats
By drowning their speaking
With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.

10 15 20

III

At last the people in a body
 To the Town Hall came flocking:
 'Tis clear, " cried they, " our Mayor's a noddy;
 And as for our Corporation—shocking 25
 To think we buy gowns lined with ermine
 For dolts that can't or won't determine
 What's best to rid us of our vermin
 You hope, because you're old and obese,
 To find in the furry civic robe ease? 30
 Rouse up, sirs. Give your brains a racking
 To find the remedy we're lacking,
 Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing!"
 At this the Mayor and Corporation
 Quaked with a mighty consternation. 35

IV

An hour they sat in council;
 At length the Mayor broke silence:
 " For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell;
 I wish I were a mile hence!
 Its easy to bid one rack one's brain— 40
 I'm sure my poor head aches again,
 I've scratched it so, and all in vain.
 Oh, for a trap, a trap, a trap!"
 Just as he said this, what should hap
 At the chamber door but a gentle tap 45
 " Bless us," cried the Mayor, " what's that "
 (With the Corporation as he sat,
 Looking little though wondrous fat;
 Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister

Than a too-long-opened oyster, 50
 Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous
 For a plane of turtle green and glutinous.)
 "Only a scraping of shoes on the mat
 Anything like the sound of a rat
 Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!" 55

V

"Come in!"—the Mayor cried, looking bigger:
 And in did come the strangest figure!
 His queer long coat from heel to head
 Was half of yellow and half of red, 60
 And he himself was tall and thin,
 With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
 And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
 No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
 But lips where smiles went out and in; 65
 There was no guessing his kith and kin:
 And nobody could enough admire
 The tall man and his quaint attire.
 Quoth one: "It's as my great-grandsire,
 Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone, 70
 Had walked this way from his painted tombstone!"

VI

He advanced to the council table:
 And, "Please your honours," said he, "I'm able,
 By means of a secret charm, to draw
 All creatures living beneath the sun, 75
 That creep, or swim, or fly, or run,
 After me so as you never saw!"

And I chiefly use my charm
 On creatures that do people harm,
 The mole, and toad, and newt, and viper; 80
 And people call me the Pied Piper."
 (And here they noticed round his neck
 A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
 To match with his coat of the self-same cheque;
 And at the scarf's end hung a pipe; 85
 And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying
 As if impatient to be playing
 Upon this pipe, as low it dangled
 Over his vesture so old-fangled.)
 " Yet," said he, " poor piper as I am,
 In Tartary I freed the Cham. 90
 Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats.
 I eased in Asia the Nizam
 Of a monstrous brood of vampyre-bats:
 And as for what your brain bewilders, 95
 If I can rid your town of rats
 Will you give me a thousand guilders ?"
 " One ? fifty thousand ! "—was the exclamation
 Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

VII

Into the street the Piper stept, 100
 Smiling first a little smile,
 As if he knew what magic slept
 In his quiet pipe the while;
 Then, like a musical adept,
 To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
 And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled, 105

Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled;
 And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
 You heard as if an army muttered;
 And the muttering grew to a grumbling; 110
 And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;
 And out of the houses the rats came tumbling;
 Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
 Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats,
 Grave old plodders, gay young friskers, 115
 Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
 Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,
 Families by tens and dozens,
 Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—
 Followed the Piper for their lives. 120
 From street to street he piped advancing,
 And step for step they followed dancing,
 Until they came to the river Weser,
 Wherein all plunged and perished !
 —Save one who, stout as as Julius Cæsar, 125
 Swam across and lived to carry
 (As he, the manuscript he cherished)
 To Rat-land home his commentary :
 Which was, “At the first shrill notes of the pipe,
 I heard a sound as of scraping tripe, 130
 And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
 Into a cider-press's gripe :

Lines.

130. **tripe**—the stomach of sheep or horned cattle prepared as food.

132. **gripe**—the trench or lips into which the apples are put in feeding the cider-press.

And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,
 And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,
 And a drawing the corks of train-oil flasks, 135
 And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks ;
 And it seemed as if a voice

(Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery
 Is breathed) called out, 'O rats, rejoice !

The world is grown to one vast drysaltery ! 140
 So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
 Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon !'
 And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,
 All ready staved, like a great sun shone
 Glorious scarce an inch before me, 145
 Just as methought it said: 'Come, bore me !'
 —I found the Weser rolling o'er me.

VIII

You should have heard the Hamelin people
 Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.
 "Go," cried the Mayor, "and get long poles, 150
 Poke out the nests and block up the holes !
 Consult with carpenters and builders,
 And leave in our town not even a trace
 Of the rats !"—when suddenly, up the face
 Of the Piper perked in the market-place, 155
 With a, "First, if you please, my thousand guilders!"

IX

A thousand guilders ! The Mayor looked blue
 So did the Corporation too.
 For council dinners made rare havoc 160

With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock;
 And half the money would replenish
 Their cellar's biggest but with Rhenish.
 To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
 With a gipsy coat of red and yellow ! 165
 " Beside," quoth the Mayor, with a knowing wink,
 " Our business was done at the river's brink;
 We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,
 And what's dead can't come to life, I think.
 So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink 170
 From the duty of giving you something for drink,
 And a matter of money to put in your poke;
 But, as for the guilders, what we spoke
 Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.
 Beside, our losses have made us thrifty. 175
 A thousand guilders ! Come, take fifty !"

X

The Piper's face fell, and he cried:
 " No trifling ! I can't wait, beside !
 I've promised to visit by dinner time .
 Bagdat, and accept the prime 180
 Of the Head Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,
 For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,
 Of a nest of scorpions no survivor:
 With him I proved no bargain-driver,
 With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver ! 185
 And folks who put me in a passion
 May find me pipe to another fashion."

XI

“ How ? ” cried the Mayor, “ d’ye think I brook
 Being worse treated than a Cook ?
 Insulted by a lazy ribald 190
 With idle pipe and vesture piebald ?
 You threaten us, fellow ? Do your worst,
 Blow your pipe there till you burst ! ”

XII

Once more he stept into the street,
 And to his lips again 195
 Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane ;
 And ere he blew three notes (such sweet
 Soft notes as yet musician’s cunning
 Never gave the enraptured air)
 There was a rustling, that seemed like a bustling 200
 Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling.
 Small feet were patterning, wooden shoes clattering,
 Little hands clapping, and little tongues chattering,
 And like fowls in a farmyard when barley is scat-
 tering
 Out came the children running. 205
 All the little boys and girls,
 With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
 And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,
 Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
 The wonderful music with shouting and laughter. 210

XIII

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
 As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
 Unable to move a step, or cry

To the children merrily skipping by,
 —Could only follow with the eye 215
 That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
 But how the Mayor was on the rack,
 And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,
 As the Piper turned from the High Street
 To where the Weser rolled its waters 220
 Right in the way of their sons and daughters !
 However, he turned from South to West,
 And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,
 And after him the children pressed;
 Great was the joy in every breast. 225
 "He never can cross that mighty top !
 He's forced to let the piping drop,
 And we shall see our children stop !"
 When, lo, as they reached the mountain-side,
 A wondrous portal opened wide, 230
 As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;
 And the Piper advanced and the children followed,
 And when all were in to the very last
 The door in the mountain-side shut fast.
 Did I say all ? No ! One was lame, 235
 And could not dance the whole of the way;
 And in after years, if you would blame
 His sadness, he was used to say,—
 "It's dull in our town since my playmates left !
 I can't forget that I'm bereft 240
 Of all the pleasant sights they see,
 Which the Piper also promised me.
 For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,
 Joining the town and just at hand,

Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew, 245
 And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
 And everything was strange and new;
 The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,
 And the dogs outran our fallow deer,
 And honey-bees had lost their stings, 250
 And horses were born with eagles' wings:
 And just as I became assured
 My lame foot would be speedily cured,
 The music stopped and I stood still,
 And found myself outside the hill. 255
 Left alone against my will,
 To go now limping as before,
 And never hear of that country more ! ”

XIV

Alas, alas for Hamelin !
 There came into many a burgher's pate 260
 A text which says that heaven's gate
 Opes to the rich at as easy rate
 As the needle's eye takes a camel in !
 The Mayor sent East, West, North, and South,
 To offer the Piper, by word of mouth, 265
 Wherever it was men's lot to find him,
 Silver and gold to his heart's content,
 If he'd only return the way he went,
 And bring the children behind him.
 But when he saw 'twas a lost endeavour, 270
 And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,
 They made a decree that lawyers never
 Should think their records dated duly

If, after the day of the month and year,
These words did not as well appear, 275
"And so long after what happened here
 On the Twenty-second of July,
Thirteen hundred and seventy-six :"
And the better in memory to fix
The place of the children's last retreat, 280
They called it, the Pied Piper's Street—
Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
Was sure for the future to lose his labour.
Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern
 To shock with mirth a street so solemn;
But opposite the place of the cavern 285
 They wrote the story on a column,
And on the great church-window painted
The same, to make the world acquainted
How their children were stolen away, 290
And there it stands to this very day.
And I must not omit to say
That in Transylvania there's a tribe
Of alien people that ascribe
The outlandish ways and dress 295
On which their neighbours lay such stress,
To their fathers and mothers having risen
Out of some subterraneous prison
Into which they were trepanned
Long time ago in a mighty band 300
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
But how or why, they don't understand.

Line.

282. tabor—a small drum.

XV

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers
Of scores out with all men—especially pipers ! 305
And, whether they pipe us free from rats or from
mice,
If we've promised them aught, let us keep our
promise !

ROBERT BROWNING
1812—1889.

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN.

A poem most vividly realized and told with a liveliness that has made it a favourite with young people in many lands. There are two things to be especially noticed in the poem and they are the remarkable originality of the rhyming practised by the author, and the surprise given us in the course of the narration and that is quite in the tradition of all best story-telling. The poet has not used the ordinary ballad metre but adopted a verse pattern of his own. It should be considered what advantages he has obtained in the choice of so original a verse pattern.

THE JACKDAW OF RHEIMS.

The Jackdaw sat on the Cardinal's chair !
Bishop and abbot and prior were there.

Many a monk, and many a friar,
Many a knight, and many a squire,
With a great many more of lesser degree,— . 5
In sooth a goodly company;
And they served the Lord Primate on bended knee.
Never, I ween, Was a prouder seen,
Read of in books, or dreamt of in dreams !
Than the Cardinal Lord Archbishop of Rheims ! 10

In and out.' Through the motley rout,
That little Jackdaw kept hopping about;
Here and there, Like a dog in a fair,
Over comfits and cakes, And dishes and plates
Cowl and cope, and rochet and pall, 15

Lines.

2. **bishop and abbot and prior**—these are degrees of ecclesiastical rank.
15. **cowl**—the cloth hood of a monk's dress.
cope—a semi-circular vestment without shivers and with a hood worn during ecclesiastical processions.
rochet—close fitting linen vestment, worn by bishops and abbots.
pall—cloak or mantle.

Mitre and crosier ! he hopp'd upon all !

With saucy air, He perch'd on the chair
Where, in state, the great Lord Cardinal sat
In the great Lord Cardinal's great red hat ;

And he peer'd in the face Of his Lordship's
Grace. 20

With a satisfied look, as if he would say,
" We two are the greatest folks here to-day ! "

And the priests, with awe, As such freaks they
saw,

Said, " The devil must be in that little Jackdaw ! "
The feast was over, the board was clear'd. 25
The flawns and the custards, had all disappear'd,
And six little singing-boys,—dear little souls !

In nice clean faces, and nice white stoles,
Came, in order due, Two by two,

Marching that grand refectory through ! 30

A nice, little boy held a golden ewer,
Emboss'd and fill'd with water, as pure
As any that flows between Rheims and Namur,
Which a nice little boy stood ready to catch

In a fine golden hand-basin made to match. 35

Two nice little boys, rather more grown,
Carried lavender-water, and eau de Cologne ;
And a nice little boy had a nice cake of soap,
Worthy of washing the hands of the Pope.

Lines.

16. mitre—the head-dress worn by a bishop.

crosier—the pastoral staff or crook of a bishop.

26. flawns and custards—varieties of pancakes.

28. stoles—long narrow vestment reaching to the feet.

One little boy more A napkin bore, 40
 Of the best white diaper, fringed with pink,
 And a Cardinal's Hat mark'd in "permanent ink."
 The great Lord Cardinal turns at the sight.
 Of these nice little boys dress'd all in white:
 From his fingers he draws His costly
 turquoise; 45
 And, not thinking at all about little Jackdaws,
 Deposits it straight by the side of his plate
 While the nice little boys on his eminence wait;
 Till, when nobody's dreaming of any such thing,
 That little Jackdaw hops off with the ring ! 50
 There's a cry and a shout, and a deuce of a rout,
 And nobody seems to know what they're about,
 But the monks have their pockets all turn'd inside
 out;
 To friars are kneeling, and hunting, and feeling
 The carpet," the floor, and the walls, and the ceil-
 ing. 55
 The Cardinal drew off each plum-coloured shoe,
 And left his red stockings exposed to the view;
 He peeps, and he feels In the toes and the heels.
 They turn up the dishes,—they turn up the plates,—
 They take up the poker and poke out the grates, 60
 —They turn up, the rugs, they examine the
 mugs :—
 But, no !—no such thing;—they can't find THE
 RING !
 And the Abbot declared that, " when nobody twigg'd
 it,

Lines.

63. *twigg'd it*—a slang word meaning—understood it.
 64. *prigg'd it*—slang for filched or thieved it.

Some rascal or other had popp'd in, and prigg'd
it ! ”

The Cardinal rose with a dignified look, 65

He call'd for his candle, his bell, and his book !

In holy anger, and pious grief,

He solemnly cursed that rascally thief !

He cursed him at board, he cursed him in bed;

He cursed him in sleeping, that every night 70

He should dream of the devil, and wake in a
fright :

He cursed him in eating, he cursed him in drinking,

He cursed him in coughing, in sneezing, in winking;

He cursed him in sitting, in standing, in lying;

He cursed him in walking, in riding, in flying, 75

He cursed him in living, he cursed him dying !—
Never was heard such a terrible curse !

But what gave rise To no little surprise,

Nobody seem'd one penny the worse !

The day was gone, The night came on, 80

The Monks and the Friars they search'd till dawn;

When the Sacristan saw, On crumpled claw,
Come limping a poor little lame Jackdaw !

No longer gay, As on yesterday ;

His feathers all seem'd to be turned the wrong
way ;— 85

His pinions droop'd—he could hardly stand—

His head was as bald as the palm of your hand ;

His eyes so dim, So wasted each limb,

Line.

82 crumpled claw—contracted or shrunken.

That, heedless of grammar, they all cried, " That's
Him.—

That's the scamp that has done this scandalous
thing ! 90

That's the thief that has got my Lord Cardinal's
Ring ! "

The poor little Jackdaw, When the monks he
saw,

Feebly gave vent to the ghost of a caw;
And turn'd his bald head, as much as to say,
" Pray be so good as to walk this way ! " 95

Slower and slower He limp'd on before,
Till they came to the back of the belfry door,

When the first thing they saw,

'Midst the sticks and the straw,
Was the RING in the nest of that little Jack-
daw ! 100

Then the great Lord Cardinal call'd for his book,
And off that terrible curse he took;

The mute expression Served in lieu of confession,
And, being thus coupled with full restitution,

The Jackdaw got plenary absolution ! 105
—When those words were heard, That poor little
bird

Was so changed in a moment, 'twas really absurd.

He grew sleek, and fat; In addition to that,
A fresh crop of feathers came thick as a mat !

Lines.

103. in lieu of—instead of.

105. plenary absolution—complete release from punishment.

His tail waggled more Even than before; 110
 But no longer it wagg'd with an impudent air,
 No longer he perch'd on the Cardinal's chair.

He hopp'd now about With a gait devout;
 At Matins, at Vespers, he never was out;
 And, so far from any more pilfering deeds, 115
 He always seem'd telling the Confessor's beads.
 If any one lied—or if any one swore.—

Or slumber'd in prayer-time and happen'd to snore,
 That good Jackdaw Would give a great "Caw,"
 As much as to say, "Don't do so any more!" 120
 While many remark'd, as his manners they saw
 That they "never had known such a pious Jack-
 daw!"

He long lived the pride Of that country-side,
 And at last in the odour of sanctity died;
 When, as words were too faint His merits to
 paint 125
 The Conclave determined to make him a Saint!
 And on newly-made Saints and Popes, as you know,
 It's the custom, at Rome, new names to bestow,
 So they canonised him by the name of "Jim Crow!"

Lines.

114. **Matins**—one of the seven canonical hours observed in Catholic church services, usually sung between mid-night or daybreak.
Vespers—the last but one of the seven canonical hours—generally devoted to the evening church services.

126. **the conclave**—the council of the Pope.

139. **canonised**—enrolled in the canon or list of saints.

THE JACKDAW OF RHEIMS.

Here is a poem that saw publication a little before *The Pied Piper*. At the time, if one thing was at all popular with the reading-public it was what was known as 'mediaevalism,' or the 'Gothic romance.' This was expressed supremely in prose and verse by Scott, but to it was added by lesser writers a spice of the horrible and fantastic. Old Gothic ruins which had seen their day of glory in the Middle Ages, particularly old religious houses, abbeys and monasteries, all haunted by a thousand ghosts and spectres rattling their chains about long ago deserted and decayed corridors and subterranean entrances, formed a good deal of the basis for such tales. Here is a tale occupied in satisfying obviously a popular demand, but expressed in jocular and happy vein and from which all traces of the morbid, the supernatural, and the grisley are absent. It forms an interesting link and comparison with the *Pied Piper* and is quite its equal, at any rate, in liveliness and vigour. Whether it is as good a story it is for yourselves to determine.

THE CAVALIER'S ESCAPE.

Trample ! trample ! went the roan,
Trap ! trap ! went the grey:
But *pad* ! *pad* ! *PAD* ! like a thing that was mad
My chestnut broke away.
It was just five miles from Salisbury town, 5
And but one hour to day.

Thud ! THUD ! came on the heavy roan,
Rap ! RAP ! the mettled grey;
But my chestnut mare was of blood so rare,
That she showed them all the way. 10

Spur on ! spur on !—I doffed my hat,
And wished them all good day.

They splashed through miry rut and pool—
Splintered through fence and rail.
But chestnut Kate switched over the gate—
I saw them droop and tail: 15
To Salisbury town—but a mile down,
Once over this brook and rail.

Trap ! trap ! I heard their echoing hoofs,
Past the walls of mossy stone; 20
The roan flew on at a staggering pace,
But blood is better than bone.
I patted old Kate and gave her the spur,
For I knew it was all my own.

But trample ! trample ! came the steeds, 25
 And I saw their wolf's eyes burn;
 I felt like a royal hart at bay,
 And made me ready to turn,
 I looked where highest grew the may,
 And deepest arched the fern. 30

I flew at the first knave's sallow throat ;
 One blow, and he was down.
 The second rogue fired twice and missed ;
 I sliced the villain's crown
 Clove through the rest, and flogged brave Kate, 35
 Fast, fast, to Salisbury town.

Pad ! pad ! they came on the level sward,
 Thud ! thud ! upon the sand,
 With a gleam, of swords, and a burning match,
 And a shaking of flag and hand 40
 But one long bound, and I passed the gate
 Safe from the canting band.

W. THORNBURY.

Lines.

- 27. royal hart—stag or male deer
- 29. where highest grew the may—meaning he looked upwards where the hawthorn-flowers blossomed high in the hedge at the roadside.
- 31. sallow throat—yellow throat

THE CAVALIER'S ESCAPE.

A spirited and lively little poem illustrating one of those breathless incidents that must have been common enough when England was divided against itself in the wars of Cavalier and Roundhead.

In this lively narration we are made to feel that not only men but horses are playing a vital part in the action that follows.

The poem opens with the sound of hoofbeasts, and they follow us throughout the poem—indeed we are given a veritable poem of sound. Here is undoubtedly a poem wherein the very fullest pleasure may be enjoyed by reading aloud.

Whatever sides History may have invited us to take we can have no option in the poem—we must be a Cavalier or nothing. With the Cavalier we can enjoy the race knowing there is no hatred for the pursuing horses but only for their riders. He has a great love for his own steed, this Cavalier, for in those romantic days often a fine horse stood between death and his master.

Here is an excellent story for retelling in prose.

THE PASSING OF SOHRAB.

He spoke; and Sohrab smiled on him, and took
The spear, and drew it from his side, and eased
His wound's imperious anguish; but the blood
Came welling from the open gash, and life
Flow'd with the stream;—all down his cold white
 side. 5

The crimson torrent ran, dim now and soiled,
Like the soil'd tissue of white violets
Left, freshly gathered, on their native bank,
By children whom their nurses call with haste
Indoors from the sun's eye; his head droop'd
low, 10
His limbs grew slack; motionless, white, he lay—
White, with eyes closed; only when heavy gasps,
Deep heavy gasps quivering through all his frame,
Convulsed him back to life, he open'd them,
And fixed them feebly on his father's face; 15
Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs
Unwillingly the spirit fled away,

Lines.

4. welling—streaming out.
6. dim now and soiled—the white of his body is here likened to the delicate tissue of white violets. It is now soiled by the severity of his wound. The whole image here is very beautiful and is cunningly inserted to soften the effect of the terribly graphic description preceding it.

Regretting the warm mansion which it left,
And youth, and bloom, and this delightful world.

So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead; 20
And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.

As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd
By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
His house, now 'mid their broken flight of steps 25
Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—
So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.

And night came down over the solemn' waste,
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,
And darken'd all; and a cold fog; with night, 30
Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
As of a great assembly loosed, and fires
Began to twinkle through the fog; for now
Both armies moved to camp, and took their meal;
The Persians took it on the open sands 35
Southward, the Tartars by the river marge.
And Rustum and his son were left alone.

MATTHEW ARNOLD
1822—1888.

Lines.

18. the warm mansion—the body.
24. by Jemshid in Persepolis—a famous king and city in old Persia. Writing before Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe somewhere in this play of the Eastern conqueror Tamburlane, (Timur), gave us this:
'Is it not passing brave to be a king
And ride in triumph through Persepolis.'
31. Oxus—the river Oxus.

THE PASSING OF SOHRAB.

Sohrab was the son of Rustum, the hero of the famous Persian epic, the *Shah Namah*, or 'Book of Kings, as the poem was called by its author—Firdausi. The episode we have here is of the tragic encounter between father and son a who did not know each other until one had morally wounded the other. It is here told with moving pathos by Matthew Arnold. The lines move with a solemn majesty most fitting to the subject, while the powerful similes that are used (17—11) (123—27) elaborate and sustained though they are, we would not lose, since they assist immeasurably in unfolding the awe and solemnity of the whole scene.

The scene is the plain of the Oxus and two rival armies are encamped—the Tartar and the Persian. The battle was to be decided by single combat, and the two heroes—Sohrab and Rustum—for two days had contended, always the advantage being with Sohrab. The fatal third day arrives and Rustum enters the fight with strength renewed. Long the warriors contend and so fiercely that they do not notice that Heaven itself will no longer witness that fearful struggle but hides its face, while darkness spreads around and the sound of the blows is such as giant woodmen deal upon the large limbs of trees.

In the gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and they alone;

For both the on-looking hosts on either hand
Stood in the broad daylight, and the sky was pure,
And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.

At last battered sore by the blows of Sohrab, Rustum
raised the dread cry of his own name:

Sohrab heard that shout,
And shrank amazed, back he recoiled one step,
And scann'd with blinking eyes the advancing form.

And at that Sohrab received a fatal wound and sinks
upon the earth. Then there follows the heart-rending
recognition of father and son, and as it is told in the
poet's words it is made a moving and a beautiful thing,
as tragic as an old Greek tale.

A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT.

What was he doing, the great god Pan,
Down in the reeds by the river
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a goat,
And breaking the golden lilies afloat
With the dragon-fly on the river.

5

He tore⁸ out a reed, the great god Pan,
From the deep cool bed of the river;
The limpid water turbidly ran,
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,
And the dragon-fly had fled away,
Ere he brought it out of the river.

10

High on the shore sat the great god Pan,
While turbidly flowed the river;
And hacked and hewed as a great god can,
With his hard bleak steel at the patient reed,
Till there was not a sign of the leaf indeed
To prove it fresh from the river.

15

Lines.

3. *ban*—trouble.
5. Notice the employment here of onomatopœia.

He cut it short, did the great god Pan,
 (How tall it stood in the river !) 20

Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,
 Steadily from the outside ring,
 And notched the poor dry empty thing
 In holes, as he sat by the river.

‘This is the way,’ laughed the great god Pan 25
 (Laughed while he sat by the river),

‘The only way, since gods began
 To make sweet music, they could succeed.’
 Then, dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed,
 He blew in power by the river. 30

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan !

Piercing sweet by the river
 Blinding sweet, O great god Pan !

The sun on the hill forgot to die,
 And the lilies revived, and the dragon-fly
 Came back to dream on the river. 35

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,

To laugh as he sits by the river,
 Making a poet out of a man:

The true gods sigh for the cost and the pain,— 40
 For the reed that grows nevermore again
 As a reed with the reeds in the river.

MRS. BROWNING
 1806—1861.

Lines.

21. *pith*—the soft substance in the centre of plants and through which the sap rises.

23. *notched*—grooved.

A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT.

Here we have a picture of 'the goat-hoofed god' at play, and the very first stanza contains a hint that his play is not always happy for others, however much it may be for him: for what is Pan doing ?

Spreading ruin and scattering ban.

The poem is rich in pictorial values. In the foreground we have the figure of Pan busied about his musical instrument made of the reed plucked from the river side. Here the landscape effect is conveyed to us by hints. First we have the suggestion of a day brilliant with sunlight—and how ? Because the dragonfly loves to flaunt his beauties in the height of day. The first stanza reveals a complete picture, and if only one colour has been mentioned how many more must also surely be there ? Try to fill in the rest of the picture yourself, for only by so doing will you see all vividly and convincingly as the poet intends you to.

But at last Pan has succeeded in his task and has made a pipe that shall be for the envy of gods and men :

'This is the way,' laughed the great god Pan
(Laughed while he sat by the river)
The only way since gods began
To make sweet music they could succeed.

And 'He blew in power by the river !' He did indeed, for never had such magic in sound poured over

the earth's bounty as now by the art of Pan. We are not told exactly what that marvel is, for again—to suggest is art, while to name is to write out a ticket for a thing, a very different affair. The poetess does not say but she hints pretty well what the power and magic of that music must be, for:—

The sun on the hill forgot to die,
And the lilies revived, and the dragon fly.

But finally what are we to make of this cryptic sentence?

The true gods sigh for the cost and pain.

Why, the cost and pain? Here then is an exercise in reflection, and if each and all shall find a different answer there is no harm, since poetry may not entirely be shared but is the possession of each individual among us, and is the sweeter for it.

The poetess has devised a lovely trick to render the poem more musically pleasing than usual. What is this device and how is it effected?

HEATHER ALE.

A GALLOWAY LEGEND.

From the bonny bells of heather
They brewed a drink long-syne,
Was sweeter far than honey,
Was stronger far than wine.
They brewed it and they drank it,
And lay in a blessed swound
For days and days together
In their dwellings underground.

5

There rose a king in Scotland,
A fell man, to his foes,
He smotes the Picts in battle,
He hunted them like roes.
Over miles of the red mountain
He hunted as they fled,
And strewed the dwarfish bodies
Of the dying and the dead.

10

15

Lines.

1. **bonny bells**—the small flower of the heather with bell-like formation.
2. **long-syne**—long since.
3. **swound**—sworn.
11. **picts**—a warlike primitive people constantly at war with the more civilized inhabitants of northern England and Scotland.

Summer came in the country,
 Red was the heather bell.
 But the manner of the brewing
 Was none alive to tell. 20
 In the graves that were like children's
 On many a mountain head,
 The Brewsters of the heather
 Lay numbered with the dead.

The king in the red moorland 25
 Rode on a summer's day;
 And the bees hummed, and the curlews
 Cried beside the way.
 The king rode, and was angry,
 Black was his brow and pale, 30
 To rule in a land of heather
 And lack the Heather Ale.

It fortuned that his vassals,
 Riding free on the heath,
 Came on a stone that was fallen 35
 And vermin hid beneath.
 Rudely plucked from their hiding,
 Never a word they spoke:
 A son and his aged father—
 Last of the dwarfish folk. 40

Lines.

27. **curlew**—a wading bird haunting the Scotch moors, having a very long slender bill and legs and a short tail.
33. **it fortuned**—it chanced.
36. **vermin**—troublesome animals such as mice and rats.

The king sat high on his charger,
 He looked on the little men;
 And the dwarfish and swarthy couple
 Looked at the king again.

Down by the shore he had them;
 And there on the giddy brink—
 'I will give you life, ye vermin,
 For the secret of the drink.'

There stood the son and father
 And they looked high and low.
 The heather was red around them,
 The sea rumbled below.
 And up and spoke the father,
 Shrill was his voice to hear:
 'I have a word in private,
 A word for the royal ear.

'Life is dear to the aged,
 And honour a little thing;
 I would gladly sell the secret,'
 Quoth the Pict to the King.
 His voice was small as a sparrow's,
 And shrill and wonderful clear:
 'I would gladly sell my secret,
 Only my son I fear.

'For life is a little matter,
 And death is nought to the young;
 And I dare not sell my honour.
 Under the eye of my son.

45

50

55

60

65

Take him, O king, and bind him,
 And cast him far in the deep:
 And it's I will tell the secret
 That I have sworn to keep.'

70

They took the son and bound him,
 Neck and heels in a thong,
 And a lad took him and swung him
 And flung him far and strong,
 And the sea swallowed his body,
 Like that of a child of ten;—
 And there on the cliff stood the father;
 Last of the dwarfish men.

75

'True was the word I told you:
 Only my son I feared;
 For I doubt the sapling courage,
 That goes without the beard.
 But now in vain is the torture,
 Fire shall never avail:
 Here dies in my bosom
 The secret of Heather Ale.'

85

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
 1850—1894.

Line

24. sapling courage—young courage.

HEATHER ALE.

A poem by the author of one of the world's most wonderful stories for boys—*Treasure Island*. Stevenson was a great romancer and loved a ballad even as much as his countryman Sir Walter Scott. Here we have a straightforward tale, and in this it adheres to the old ballad form, but it has one thing in which it is more modern—it possesses the trick demanded of most successful short stories—the surprise.

We must imagine ourselves back in a twilight time of English and Scottish history, a semi-barbarous time when the chief enemies of rule and order were such warlike and half savage piratical tribes as the Picts, whose homes were believed to be in the mountain caves. Then—

There rose a king in Scotland,
A fell man to his foes,
He smote the Picts in battle,
He hunted them like roes.

We are taken at once into the heart of the story and we learn the nature of the heather ale, the secret of whose making a king of Scotland would have at any price. Constantly we are kept in mind of the tiny stature of the heather-men, for it is part of the author's purpose to show us how in bodies so puny lies an indomitable spirit. The picture is heightened by the contempt of the king and his vassals in whose eyes they are nothing more than vermin. Then gradually we are led on to the great dramatic moment—how is a father and his son to retain

inviolable the secret of the heather ale ? With masterful telling the king and ourselves are led on a false scent by the little old man whose voice—

Was small as a sparrow's
And shrill and wonderful clear.

And in doubt we continue till the very last stanza when only is the full extent revealed of what has been a piece of brave and splendid cheating. Compare this poem carefully with the other narrative poems in this selection especially with '*He Fell Among Thieves*' and discover reasons for your preferences.

I HEAR AMERICA SINGING.

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should
 be blythe and strong,
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank
 or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work,
 or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his
 boat, the deck-hand singing on the steamboat
 deck, 5
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the
 hatter singing as he stands,
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way
 in the morning, or at noon intermission or at
 sundown,
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young
 wife at work, or of the girl sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to
 none else,
The day what belongs to the day—at night the
 party of young fellows, robust, friendly, 10
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious
 songs.

TO A PUPIL.

Is reform needed ? Is it through you ?
The greater the reform needed, the greater the
Personality you need to accomplish it.

You ! do you not see how it would serve to have
eyes, bland, complexion, clean and sweet ? 5
Do you not see how it would serve to have such a
body and soul that when you enter the crowd an
atmosphere of desire and command enters with
you, and every one is impress'd with your Person-
ality ?

O the magnet ! the flesh over and over ! 10
Go, dear friend, if need be give up all else, and
commence to-day to inure yourself to pluck,
reality, self-esteem, definiteness, elevatedness,
Rest not till you rivet and publish yourself of your
own Personality.

Line

12. **inure yourself**—accustom yourself.

TO ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

O Captain ! my Captain ! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we
sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all
exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim
and daring !
But *O* heart ! heart ! heart ! 5.
O the bleeding drops of red !
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain ! my Captain ! rise up and hear the bells ;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle
trills, 10
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the
shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager
faces turning ;
Here, Captain ! dear father !
This arm beneath your head !
It is some dream that on the deck 15
You've fallen cold and dead.

Line.

1. fearful trip—the bitter civil war which tore America from end to end.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and
still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse
nor will;
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage
closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship come in with
object won; 20
Exult, O shores ! and ring, O bells !
But I, with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

WALT WHITMAN
1819—1892.

TO ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

No poet in the world is there who can be more identified with the spirit of youth and glorious comradeship than the American poet Walt Whitman. This instinct leaps and glows for us from almost every page of his strong and eloquent harmonies. He does not sing for us in the manner of the old accepted songs—consider what a new and more remarkable music has been born since we left Shelley and Byron and Keats, or for that matter, Tennyson and Browning. At a time when the polished and sometimes exquisitely dainty instrument of a Tennyson plunged Victorian England into ecstasies a new music was being wrought that owes nothing to the legends of Greece and Rome, the chivalry of the Middle Ages, or the ancient glories of Italy, but was born of the open air and of the mountains and the rivers and the vast plains, and spoke not for the old but for the new world:

The flashing and golden pageant of California,
The sudden and gorgeous drama, the sunny and
ample lands,
The long and varied stretch from Puget sound to
Colorado south.

The world had the first fruits of this remarkable man in 1855, but it did not heed. The great Emerson sent Whitman his first recognition.

Not only in his poems did Whitman reveal that surpassing love for his fellow-men, but gave it a practical

form by serving in the American Civil War with passionate devotedness as a nurse to the wounded. When that was over he had given more than himself, he had given his youth and his health. The fundamental idea of Whitman's poetry is that 'of a great loving confederacy of men and women, united in the undying cause of Truth and Beauty.' And again he is with the mystics when he says—

" I am the poet of the Body, and I am the poet of the Soul,
 The pleasures of heaven are with me, and the pains
 of hell are with me.

But first and foremost in the ordering of his life's conduct is his mission of 'companionship,' and the meaning of friendship :—

I will plant companionship thick as trees along
 all the rivers of America, and along the shores
 of the great lakes, and all over the prairies.

We see in fact that deepest truth of the democratic ideal taken up and re-iterated again and again with a depth, and a conviction, and a passionate zeal such as India to-day has only witnessed in the enunciations of some of her more sober leaders, 'the spirit of comradeship as opposed to the antagonism of class with class, and nation with nation which has stirred men selfishly and cruelly so long.'

So thus it may be seen how far Whitman stands away

from the old traditional idea of love as the only great theme for poetry, or the ordinary poetaster's topics,—rose-water agonies, drawing-room romances, the sentimental valley of the rose and the nightingale, in the dreaming moonlight of romance, all the delights of the Persian garden.

In form, too, Whitman has forsaken tradition and convention and gone to the natural idiom of speech, for therein lies most sincerity. "In the right adjustment then, of the relations betwixt prose and verse, lies the difficult secret of the art of words. Whitman noting in his literary work the restricting effect of exact rhyme measures, sought to attain a new poetic mode by a return to the rhythmic movement of prose, with what signal result may be seen by a sympathetic dive almost anywhere into leaves, of grass. It is a substitution it is found at once, of harmony for melody; of a larger, more epic music for the old lyric movements of poetry."

That is the case for Whitman's music and we can hear it quite convincingly in *I Hear America Singing*.

HE FELL AMONG THIEVES.

“Ye have robbed,” said he, “ye have slaughtered
and made an end,
Take your ill-got plunder, and bury the dead :
What will ye more of your guest and sometime
friend ?”
“Blood for our blood,” they said.

He laughed: “If one may settle the score for
five, 5
I am ready; but let the reckoning stand till day :
I have loved the sunlight as dearly as any alive.”
“You shall die at dawn,” said they.

He flung his empty revolver down the slope,
He climb’d alone to the Eastward edge of the
trees; 10
All night long in a dream untroubled of hope
He brooded, clasping his knees.

He did not hear the monotonous roar that fills
The ravine where the Yassin river sullenly flows;
He did not see the starlight on the Laspur hills, 15
Or the far Afghan snows.

He saw the April noon on his books aglow,
 The wistaria trailing in at the window wide;
 He heard his father's voice from the terrace below
 Calling him down to ride. 20

He saw the grey little church across the park,
 The mounds that hid the loved and honoured dead;
 The Norman arch, the chancel softly dark,
 The brasses black and red.

He saw the School Close, sunny and green, 25
 The runner beside him, the stand by the parapet
 wall,
 The distant tape, and the crowd roaring between
 His name over all.

Lines.

17. on his books aglow—the vision of his own familiar room where he would work at his studies.
18. wistaria—a beautiful climbing plant with clusters of flowers of a mauve tint and carrying a most delightful fragrance.
23. the Norman arch—his vision of the old church built originally in Norman times and with doorways typical of Norman architecture.
- chancel—the eastern part of a church and separated from the nave or main body usually by a screen of lattice-work.
24. brasses—thin plates of brass let into the pavement marking a grave and cut in the likeness of the knight and lady buried underneath.
25. school close—school grounds.

He saw the dark wainscot and timbered roof,
 The long tables, and the faces merry and keen; 30
 The College Eight and their trainer dining aloof,
 The Dons on the dais serene.

He watch'd the liner's stern ploughing the foam,
 He felt her trembling speed and the thrash of
 her screw;
 He heard her passengers' voices talking of home, 35
 He saw the flag she flew.

Lines.

29. **dark wainscot**—pannelled boards or the walls of apartments—a feature of interior domestic decoration of the 16th and 17th century particularly in England and France. All noble houses possessed this type of interior decoration, and well-established schools and colleges for the best rooms.
30. **timbered roof**—a very handsome method of roof decoration and a feature of the Gothic style. The dining halls of Oxford and Cambridge Colleges possess many fine specimens of timbered roofs.
30. **long tables**—dining tables.
31. **college eight**—the rowing eight of the college.
32. **dons**—the professors attached to the teaching and disciplinary strength of the college, including the head of the college.
32. **dais**—raised platform where the table was set at right angles to the rest of the hall and at which the dons sat for their evening meal. This meal is a state function in the life of a residential college.
33. **liner's stern**—the end of the ship on which he sailed for India.

And now it was down. He rose strong on his feet,
And strode to his ruin'd camp below the wood;
He drank the breath of the morning cool and sweet.
His murderers round him stood. 40

Light on the Laspur hills was broadening fast,
The blood-red snow-peaks chilled to a dazzling
white;
He turn'd, and saw the golden circle at last,
Cut by the eastern height.
*

“ O glorious Life, Who dwellest in earth and sun, 45
I have lived, I praise and adore Thee.”

A sword swept
Over the passes the voices one by one
Faded, and the hill slept.

HENRY NEWBOLT.

1862—

HE FELL AMONG THIEVES.

We feel a white heat intensity of vision in this wonderfully conceived and dramatic little poem. In the history of Indian frontier warfare there must have been many such, and here is one caught up for us at white heat in the vividness of its beauty and its tragedy. That economy of narrative we first noticed was so masterfully handled in *Heather Ale* is used here in greater maturity and with added hints of beauty. How long did it take for Stevenson to introduce his situation, some two or three stanzas, while here the first verse plunges us directly into the sternest moment a man may enter—the hour of his fate. For ourselves we must guess what has gone before, since our modern artist does not do all the work for us, because it is good art to suggest but bad art to name. We are given however quite enough in that opening speech to guess with certainty the pitiful tragedy that had happened—a tragedy of waste, for at dawn a fine young soul, ripe with magnificent promise is to be sped all too early on its last long journeying. In a few brief verses we are permitted to glimpse the youngman's career up to this moment of disaster. It is a young Englishman we follow, watching quietly the panorama of the past unfold before him:—

He did not hear the monotonous roar that fills
The ravine where the Tassin river sullenly
flows;

He did not see the starlight on the Laspur hills
Or the far Afghan snows.

In inimitable touches of colour, and place, and name and deed, we are carried in the succeeding verses down the years of home and school and college to the liner that is to bridge the old life to the new, the very threshold of the great adventure that seemed so full of glorious promise.

In treatment the poem is entirely dramatic, all the subsidiary matter is used but to force the moment of crisis out into sterner and more overwhelming relief. The treatment should be carefully compared with that of *Heather Ale*.

ARABIA.

Far are the shades of Arabia,
Where the Princes ride at noon,
'Mid the verdurous vales and thickets,
Under the ghost of the moon;
And so dark is that vaulted purple
Flowers in the forest rise
And toss into blossom 'gainst phantom stars
Pale in the noonday skies.

5

Sweet is the music of Arabia
In my heart, when out of dreams
I still in the thin clear mirk of dawn
Descry her gliding streams;
Hear her strange lutes on the green banks
Ring loud with the grief and delight
Of the dim-silked, dark-haired Musicians
In the brooding silence of night.

10

They haunt me—her lutes and her forests;
No beauty on earth I see
But shadowed with that dream recalls
Her loveliness to me.
Still eyes look coldly upon me,
Cold voices whisper and say—
'He is crazed with the spell of far Arabia,
They have stolen his wits away.'

15

20

Lines.

11. *mirk*—darkness.
12. *descry*—notice.

NOD.

Softly along the road of evening.

In a twilight dim with rose,
Wrinkled with age, and drenched with dew
Old Nod, the shepherd, goes.

His drowsy flock streams on before him, 5
Their fleeces charged with gold,
To where the sun's last beam leans low
On Nod the shepherd's fold.

The hedge is quick and green with briar,
From their sand the conies creep; 10
And all the birds that fly in heaven
Flock singing home to sleep.

His lambs outnumber a noon's roses,
Yet, when night's shadows fall,
His blind old sheep-dog, slumber-soon, 15
Misses not one of all.

His are the quiet steeps of dreamland,
The waters of no-more-pain,
His ram's bell rings 'neath an arch of stars,
"Rest, rest, and rest again." 20

Lines.

5. **drowsy**—flock of sheep.
9. **quick and green with briar**—fresh and green with the white heath, a fragrant flavouring shrub.
10. **conies**—rabbits.

TARTARY.

If I were Lord of Tartary,
 Myself and me alone,
My bed should be of ivoi^y,
 Of beaten gold my throne:
And in my court should peacocks flaunt, 5
And in my forests tigers haunt,
And in my pools great fishes slant
 Their fins athwart the sun

If I were Lord of Tartary,
 Trumpeters every day 10
To every meal should summon me,
 And in my courtyard bray; “
And in the evenings lamps would shine
Yellow as honey, red as wine,
While harp and flute and mandoline. 15
 Made music sweet and gay.

If I were Lord of Tartary,
 I'd wear a robe of beads.
White, and gold, and green they'd be—
 And clustered thick as seeds. 20

Lines.

7. great fishes slant—swerve obliquely.
8. athwart the sun—sideways in the sun.
12. in my courtyard bray—sound.

And ere should wane the morning-star,
 I'd don my robe and scimitar,
 And zebras seven should draw my car
 Through Tartary's dark glades.

Lord of the fruits of Tartary,

25

Her rivers silver-pale !

Lord of the hills of Tartary,

Glen, thicket, wood and dale.

Her flashing stars, her scented breeze,

Her trembling lakes, like foamless seas.

30

Her bird-delighting citron-trees

In every purple vale !

22. scimitar—short, single-edged curved sword.

23. zebras—striped horses.

THE THIEF AT ROBIN'S CASTLE.

There came a Thief one night to Robin's Castle,
He climbed up into a tree.
And sitting with his head among the branches,
A wondrous sight did see.

For there was Robin supping at his table. 5
With candles of pure wax,
His Dame and his two beauteous little children,
With velvet on their backs. 6

Platters for each there were shin-shining,
Of silver many a pound, 10
And all of beaten gold, three brimming Goblets,
Standing the table round. 6

The smell that rose up richly from the baked meats
Came thinning amid the boughs,
And much that greedy Thief who snuffed the night
air— 15
His hunger did arouse.

He watched them eating, drinking, laughing, talking,
Busy with finger and spoon,
Whilst three most cunning Fiddlers, clad in crimson,
Played them a supper-tune. 20

Line.

9. **platters . . . shin-shining**—plates glittering with brightness.

And he waiting in the tree-top like a starling.
 Till the Moon was gotten low;
 When all the windows in the walls were darkened,
 He softly in did go.

There Robin and his Dame in bed were sleeping, 25
 And his Children young and fair;
 Only Robin's Hounds from their warm kennels,
 Yelped as he climbed the stair.

All were sleeping, page and fiddler,
 Cook, scullion, free from care; 30
 Only Robin's Stallions from their stables
 Neighed as he climbed the stair.

A wee wan light the Moon did shed him,
 Hanging above the sea,
 And he counted into his bag (of beaten Silver) 35
 Platters thirty-three.

Of Spoons three score; of jolly golden goblets
 He stowed in four save one,
 And six fine three-branched Cupid Candlesticks,
 Before his work was done. 40

Nine bulging bags of money in a cupboard,
 Two snuffers, and a dish
 He found, the last all studded with great Garnets
 And shapen like a fish.

Lines.

30. scullion—servant for drudgery work.
42. snuffers—to snuff out candles.
43. garnets—a precious stone.

Then tiptoe up he stole into a Chamber
 Where on Tasselled Pillows lay
 Robin and his Dame in dreaming slumber,
 Tired with the summer's day.

That Thief he nimbled round him in the gloaming,
 Their Treasures for to spy. 50
 Combs, Brooches, Chains, and Rings, and Pins and
 Buckles
 All higgledy piggledy.

A Watch shaped in the shape of a flat, Apple
 In purest Crystal set,,
 He lifted from the hook where it was ticking 55
 And crammed in his Pochette.

He heaped the pretty Baubles on the table,
 Trinkets, Knick-knackerie,
 Pearls, Diamonds, Sapphires, Topazes, and Opals—
 All in his bag put he. 60

And there in night's pale Gloom was Robin dreaming
 He was hunting the mountain Bear,
 While his Dame in peaceful slumber in nowise
 heeded
 A greedy Thief was there.

And that ravenous Thief he climbed up even
 higher, 65
 Till into a chamber small

Line.

52. all higgledy piggledy—all anyhow.

He crept where lay poor Robin's beauteous Children,
Lovelier in sleep withal.

Oh, fairer was their Hair than Gold of Goblet,
'Yond Silver their Cheeks did shine, 70
And their little hands that lay upon the linen
Made that Thief's hard heart to pine.

But though a moment there his hard heart faltered,
Eftsoones he took them twain,
And slipped them into his Bag with all his
Plunder, 75
And soft stole down again.

Spoon, Platter, Goblet, Ducats, Dishes, Trinkets,
And those two Children dear,
A-quaking in the clinking and the clanking,
And half bemused with fear. 80

He carried down the stairs into the Courtyard,
But there he made no stay,
He just tied up his Garters, took a deep breath,
And ran like the wind away.

Past Mountain, River, Forest, River, Mountain— 85
That Thief's lean shanks sped on,
Till evening found him knocking at a Dark House,
His breath now wellnigh gone.

Line

74. *eftsoones*—an obsolete use meaning soon afterwards.

There came a little maid and asked his Business;
 A Cobbler dwelt within; 90
 And though she much disliked the Bag he carried,
 She let the Bad Man in.

He bargained with the Cobbler for a lodging
 And soft laid down his Sack—
 In the Dead of Night, with none to spy or listen— 95
 From off his weary back.

And he taught the little Chicks to call him Father,
 And he sold his stolen Pelf,
 And bought a Palace, Horses, Slaves, and Peacocks
 To ease his wicked self. 100

And though the Children never really loved him,
 He was rich past all belief.
 While Robin and his Dame o'er Delf and Pewter
 Spent all their Days in Grief.

WALTER DE LA MARE
Contemporary.

Line.

103. o'er Delf and Pewter—Delf—a beautiful glazed earth-
 ware made at Delft in Holland.
 Pewter—an alloy of four parts of tin and one of lead.
 Used for drinking vessels and particularly beer-
 tankards.

THE THIEF AT ROBIN'S CASTLE.

With the work of Walter de la Mare we pick up again the threads that we seemed to have left behind when we finished the *Nymphidia* of Michael Drayton, *Robin Goodfellow's Song*, and the poets of Queen Elizabeth. His is the poetry of fancy, of moonlight and romance, and sometimes of impish laughter, as when he sings:—

Do diddle di do
 Poor Jim Jay
 Got stuck fast
 In yesterday.

It would seem as we listen to his delicious tunes that it is impossible the world of to-day—of jazz and tooting auto-horns, of sky-scrappers, and radios—can have produced so unique a marvel. They are tunes, timid, often seeming to hesitate, yet always gathering themselves to a totality of exquisite melody. Such a result has the whole of the English lyric tradition behind it: an aristocracy of music beside the garish trumpets of to-day. It possesses too the content of pure inspiration, as pure as that of a Blake or Shelley rising out of an emotion having contact with ethereal and fairy things:—

Look thy last on all things lovely,
 Every hour. Let no night
 Seal thy sense in deathly slumber
 Till to delight

Thou have paid thy utmost blessing:
Since that all things thou wouldest praise
Beauty took from those who loved them
In other days.

All these qualities we find in the poems we have here. *Arabia* and *Tartary* are in a supremely romantic tradition, revealing that continuity of fascination to foreign and eastern spells first so astonishingly revealed in the 14th Century travels of Sir John Mandeville. What romance there can be but in a name! What visions of marble palaces and ivory-fair princesses are not concealed in the name India? For your genuine romantic never would see the India of to-day with railways and telegraphs, but the India of Shah Jehan and Udaipur. *Tartary* and *Arabia* are the beautiful kingdoms of refuge, where live our ideals enshrined and perfect, where no breath of mischief, hate or grief may enter through the enchanted doors. Here is the wonder of 'the life within us,' as some have called it to distinguish it from, 'the life without us,' which is occupied with the things of everyday and with all the petty doings of mankind from dawn to dusk. In '*Nod*' we have one of the most delightful personifications of Sleep that can be found, while *The Thief at Robin's Castle* is just full of all those incredible things that makes the kingdom of make-believe the one refuge to keep the world young and our days from mortifying in the closets of despair.

LEISURE.

What is this life, if full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.

No time to see, when woods we pass, 5
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.

No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance. 10

No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.

A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

W. H. DAVIES
Contemporary.

LEISURE.

A contemporary poet who forms a link with Words-worth in his love of Nature and the 'simple diction,' nor does he favour the rare and the strange, but for him it is—

Sweet Stay-at-Home, sweet Well-content
Thou knowest of no strange continent;

and this 'Sweet Stay-at-Home' is the loveliness of the country.

When primroses are out in spring,
And small, blue violets come between;
When merry birds sing on boughs green,
And rills, as soon as born, must sing.

He warns us in *Leisure* to find time 'to stand and stare' because if we don't we shall never see or understand anything of beauty. Perhaps in this modern world we need such warnings more than we ever did, for few enough seem to win tranquillity or peace in their daily life.

NATURE AND DEATH.

O, not in vain she gave
To the wild birds their wings;
They spread them forth, and have
Heaven for their wanderings.

But we, to whom no wings are given
Why seek we for a Heaven ?

5

And, when far o'er us fly
Those voyagers of the air,
Why must we gaze, and sigh,
O would that I were there ?

10

Why are we restless, ill-content,
Tied to one element ?

'Tis not that 'in our tears
Some happier life we crave;
Our happiest, sweetest years

15

Mysterious moments have:

The sense of our brief human lot
Clings to us, haunts our thought.

O then this pleasant earth
Seems but an alien thing

20

Faint grows her busy mirth;

Far hence our thoughts take wing:

For some enduring home we cry !

She cannot satisfy,

Line

8. *voyagers of the air—the birds of the air.*

Or bind us: only ties
 Immortal found can bless;
Only in loving eyes
 We see our happiness;
Only upon a loving breast
 Our souls find any rest. 25
30

Why thirsts the spirit so
For life? what moves it thus?
'Tis *her* voice: yes, I know
'Tis Nature cries in us:
'Tis no unholy strife of ours
Against forbidding powers.

Now lonely is the wood :
No flower now lingers, none !
The virgin sisterhood
Of roses, all are gone ;
Now Autumn sheds her latest leaf.
And in my heart is grief. 40

Ah me, for all earth rears,
 The appointed bound is placed !
After a thousand years
 The great oak falls at last:
And thou, more lovely, canst not stay
 Sweet rose, beyond thy day.

Line

39. the virgin sisterhood of roses—the spring time of roses.

Our life is not the life
 Of roses and of leaves;
 Else wherefore this deep strife,
 This pain our soul conceives ?
 The fall of ev'n such short-lived things
 To us some sorrow brings.

50

And yet plant, bird, and fly
 Feel no such hidden fire,
 Happy they live; and die
 Happy, with no desire.
 They in their brief life have fulfilled
 All Nature in them will'd.

55

And were we also made
 Of like terrestrial mould,
 We should not be afraid
 Nor feel the grave so cold;
 But, all oblivious of our fate,
 Live sweetly out our date.

60

For the great mother loves
 Her children far too well;
 These longings that she moves
 Their own fulfilment tell:
 She would not burden us with aught
 We really needed not.

65

70

Line

62. of like terrestrial mould—existing on the earth.

What though we gaze with fear,
 So blank death seems to be;
 What though no land appear
 Beyond the lonely sea;
 Still in our hearts her cry doth stay;
 She will find out a way.

75

So in the chrysalis
 Slumber those lovely wings.
 So from the shell it is
 The dazzling pearl she brings:
 Her glorious works she works alone,
 Unfathom'd, and unknown !

80

85

MANMOHAN GHOSE.
Contemporary.

Line.

80. **chrysalis**—the shell where the early life of the butterfly is lived.

NATURE AND DEATH.

This poem from the pen of Manmohan Ghose was first published by him in 1894. Since then there has been a silence, but the 1894 volume has recently been reprinted and an interest revived in the author that he has long deserved.

We have a mystical poem revealing to us Nature as the great healer and the great intelligence. The poem opens by contrasting the life of the plants and the trees with the life of human souls and how Time is ruthless in the case of both. But human beings possess feelings which the plants do not—

Our life is not the life
 Of roses and of leaves;
 Else wherefore this deep strife,
 This pain our soul conceives ?
 The fall of ev'n such short-lived things
 To us some sorrow brings.

And yet he is sure that Nature—the great mother—loves her children for too well than to burden us with the capacities of joy and sorrow for nothing. She has ordered everything for some purpose and we should not be envious of 'those voyagers of the air,' nor should we allow the thought 'of our brief human lot' to oppress us overmuch, for after all have we thought—

Why thirsts the spirit so
 For life ? What moves it thus ?
 'Tis her voice; yes I know

'Tis Nature cries in us.
 'Tis no unholy strife of ours
 Against forbidding powers.

Here the mood of brooding introspection has become almost biblical. And yet what matters it, we should not fret that—

So blank death seems to be ;

because '*She* will find out a way.' For we must have seen how the butterfly emerges from the chrysalis, and the dazzling pearl from the humble shell, so as now our state may even be as the shell or the chrysalis, in the end it shall become just as glorious as the butterfly or dazzling pearl, for Nature:

Her glorious works she works alone,
 Unfathom'd, and unknown !

This conception of Nature—the great mother—it will be interesting to compare with the other Nature poets of English literature, especially with Wordsworth.

SHERWOOD.

Sherwood in the twilight, is Robin Hood awake ?
Grey and ghostly shadows are gliding through the
brake,

Shadows of the dappled deer, dreaming of the morn,
Dreaming of a shadowy man that winds a shadowy
horn.

Robin Hood is here again: all his merry thieves 5
Hear a ghostly bugle-call, shivering through the
leaves.

Calling as he used to call, faint and far away,
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Merry, merry England has kissed the lips of June:
All the wings of fairyland were here beneath the
moon, 10

Like a flight of rose-leaves fluttering in a mist
Of opal and ruby and pearl and amethyst.

Merry, merry England is waking as of old,
With eyes of blither hazel and hair of brighter gold:
For Robin Hood is here again beneath the bursting
spray 15

In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Lines

3. **dappled deer**—deer marked with spots.
4. **shadowy man**—the ghost of Robin Hood.
14. **blither hazel**—eyes of a happy light brown colour.

Love is in the greenwood building him a house
 Of wild rose and hawthorn and honeysuckle boughs :
 Love is in the green wood, dawn is in the skies,
 And Marian is waiting with a glory in her eyes. 20

Hark ! The dazzled laverock climbs the golden
 steep !

Marian is waiting : is Robin Hood asleep ?
 Round the fairy grass-rings frolic elf and fay,
 In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Oberon, Oberon, rake away the gold, 25
 Rake away the red leaves, roll away the mould,
 Rake away the gold leaves, roll away the red,
 And wake Will Scarlett from his leafy forest bed.

Friar Tuck and Little John are riding down together
 With quarter-staff and drinking-can and grey goose
 feather, 30
 The dead are coming back again, the years are rolled
 away

In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.
 Softly over Sherwood the south wind blows
 All the heart of England hid in every rose
 Hears across the greenwood the sunny whisper
 leap, 35

Lines.

21. **dazzled laverock**—the dazzled lark.
30. **quarter-staff**—a long staff or weapon of defence grouped
 at a quarter of its length and at the middle.
grey-goose feather—used for feathering the arrows.

Sherwood in the red dawn, is Robin Hood asleep ?
 Hark, the voice of England wakes him as of old
 And, shattering the silence with cry of brighter gold,
 Bugles in the greenwood echo from the steep,

Sherwood in the red dawn, is Robin Hood asleep? 40
 Where the deer are gliding down the shadowy glen
 All across the glades of fern he calls his merry men—
 Doublets of the Lincoln green glancing through the
 May

In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day—
 Calls them and they answer: from aisles of oak and
 ash 45
 Rings the Follow ! Follow ! and the boughs begin
 to crash,
 The ferns begin to flutter and the flowers begin to
 fly,

And through the crimson dawning the robber band
 goes by.
 Robin ! Robin ! Robin ! All his merry thieves
 Answer as the bugle-note shivers through the
 leaves, 50
 Calling as he used to call, faint and far away,
 In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

ALFRED NOYES.

SHERWOOD.

In England the stories surrounding Robin Hood and his lady—Maid Marian, are as familiar as those which centre in the Punjab around Hir and Ranjha, for both belong to the popular legend of the people. We have already seen Keats' lament for the glorious days when beauty and romance lurked under the greenwood tree:—

Gone, the merry Morris din !
 Gone, the song of Gamelyn;
 Gone the tough-belted outlaw
 Idling in the 'grene shawe.'

But the present poem is no lament but rather is a spirited awakening of the glorious dead so that they move once again beneath the shades of Sherwood. For the scene is Sherwood Forest, one of the many great forests for which England at that time was famous and always associated with the memories of Robin Hood and his band of outlaws who robbed the rich to help the poor, and who was an earl by birth.

The poem is full of bustle and movement and we notice how lightly and musically the long lines are handled. There are vivid pictures full of colour; nor are the fairies left out, for Oberon the fairy-king is called upon to aid in the waking of Robin, and his 'merry' men.

THE HOST OF THE AIR.

O'Driscoll drove with a song
The wild duck and the drake,
From the tall and the tufted reeds
Of the drear Hart Lake.

And he saw how the reeds grew dark
At the coming of night tide,
And dreamed of the long dim hair
Of Bridget his bride. 5

He heard while he sang and dreamed
A piper piping away,
And never was piping so sad,
And never was piping so gay. 10

And he saw young men and young girls
Who danced on a level place
And Bridget his bride among them,
With a sad and a gay face. 15

The dancers crowded about him,
And many a sweet thing said,
And a young man brought him red wine
And a young girl white bread. 20

But Bridget drew him by the sleeve,
Away from the merry bands,

To old men playing at cards
With a twinkling of ancient hands.

The bread and the wine had a doom,
For these were the host of the air;
He sat and played in a dream
Of her long dim hair.

He played with the merry old men
And thought not of evil chance,
Until one bore Bridget his bride
Away from the merry dance.

He bore her away in his arms,
The handsomest young man there,
And his neck and his breast and his arms
Were drowned in her long dim hair.

O'Driscoll scattered the cards
And out of his dream awoke:
Old men and young men and young girls
Were gone like a drifting smoke;

But he heard high up in the air
A piper piping away,
And never was piping so sad,
And never was piping so gay.

W. B. YEATS
Contemporary.

Line

24. twinkling of ancient hands—they dealt the cards so that the white of their hands twinkled because of the swiftness of their motion.

THE HOST OF THE AIR.

Mr. Yeats like Mr. De La Mare is often far removed from the world of to-day, steeping himself in the legends of old Ireland, seeking 'one of the oldest worlds that man has imagined, the world of heroes who were in their youth for hundreds of years, or of women who came to them in the likeness of hunted fawns.' Musically our poem too is of singular and haunting beauty, depending for its effects on the exquisite varying of its accents and pauses. Someone has said of Yeats, "If you have the right ear, his verse is the easiest verse in the world to read, because the tune coincides so exactly with the sense."

Yeats wrote a beautiful and searching introduction to the *Gitanjali* of Rabindranath Tagore.

PERKIN WARBECK.

i

At Turney in Flanders I was born
Fore-doomed to splendour and sorrow,
For I was a king when they cut the corn,
And they strangle me to-morrow.

ii

Oh ! why was I made so red and white,
So fair and straight and tall ?
And why were my eyes so blue and bright,
And my hands so white and small ?

5

iii

And why was my hair like the yellow silk,
And curled like the hair of a king ?
And my body like the soft new milk
That the maids bring from milking ?

10

iv

I was nothing but a weaver's son,
I was born in a weaver's bed ;
My brothers toiled and my sisters spun,
And my mother wove for our bread.

15

v

I was the latest child she had,
And my mother loved me the best.
She would laugh for joy and anon be sad
That I was not as the rest.

20

vi

For my brothers and sisters were black as the gate
 • Whereby I shall pass to-morrow,
 But I was white and delicate,
 And born to splendour and sorrow.

vii

And my father the weaver died full soon, 25
 But my mother lived for me.
 And I had silk doublets and satin shoon
 And was nurtured tenderly.

viii

And the good priests had much joy of me,
 For I had wisdom and wit; 30
 And there was no tongue or subtlety
 But I could master it.

ix

And when I was fourteen summers old
 There came an English knight,
 With purple cloak and spurs of gold, 35
 And sword of chrysolite.

x

He gode through the town both sad and slow,
 And his hands lay in his lap;
 He wore a scarf as white as the snow,
 And a snow-white rose in his cap. 40

Lines.

27. **silk doublets and satin shoon**—the doublet was a close-fitting jacket in vogue for the 14th to 17th century. Shoon an old plural of shoe.
36. **sword of chrysolite**—sword whose hilt was encrusted with yellow or green precious stones.

xi

And he passed me by in the market-place,
 And he reined his horse and stared,
 And I looked him fair and full in the face,
 And he stayed with his head all bared.

xii

And he leaped down quick and bowed his knee, 45
 And took hold on my hand,
 And he said, "Is it ghost or wraith that I see,
 Or the White Rose of England?"

xiii

And I answered him in the Flemish tongue,
 "My name is Peter Warbeckke, 50
 From Katherine de Faro I am sprung,
 And my father was John Orbeckke

xiv

"My father toiled and weaved with his hand
 And bare neither sword nor shield
 And the White Rose of fair England 55
 Turned red on Bosworth field."

xv

And he answered, "What matter for anything?
 For God hath given to thee
 The voice of a king and the face of a king,
 And the king thou shalt surely be." 60

xvi

And he wrought on me till the vesper bell,
 And I rode forth out of the town:

Line

61. **vesper bell**—the bell which tolled for vespers the best church service in the Catholic day.

And I might not bid my mother farewell,
Lest her love should seem more than a crown.

xvii

And the sun went down, and the night waxed
black, 65

And the wind sang wearily;

And I thought on my mother, and would have gone
back,

But he would not suffer me.

xviii

And we rode, and we rode, was it nine days or
three ?

Till we heard the bells that ring

For "my cousin Margaret of Burgundy,"

And I was indeed a king.

xix

For I had a hundred fighting men

To come at my beck and call,

And I had silk and fine linen

To line my bed withal.

xx

They dressed me all in silken dresses,

And little I wot did they reck

Of the precious scents for my golden tresses,

And the golden chains for my neck.

xxi

And all the path for "the rose" to walk

Was strewn with flowers and posies,

I was the milk-white rose of York,

The rose of all the roses.

80

85

xxii

And the Lady Margaret taught me well,
 Till I spake without lisping
 Of Warwick and Clarence and Isabel,
 And "my father" Edward the King.

xxiii

And I sailed to Ireland and to France, 90
 And I sailed to fair Scotland,
 And I had much honour and pleasaunce,
 And Katherine Gordon's hand.

xxiv

And after that what brooks it to say
 Whither I went or why ? 95
 I was as loath to leave my play
 And fight, as now to die.

xxv

For I was not made for wars and strife
 And blood and slaughtering,
 I was but a boy that loved his life, 100
 And I had not the heart of a king.

xxvi

Oh ! why hath God dealt so hardly with me,
 That such a thing should be done,
 That a boy should be born with a king's body
 And the heart of a weaver's son ? 105

xxvii

I was well pleased to be at the court,
 Lord of the thing that seems ;

Line

88. Warwick and Clarence and Isabel—the chief actors in
 the royal drama.

It was merry to be a prince for sport,
A king in a kingdom of dreams.

•
xxviii

But ever they said I must strive and fight 110
To wrest away the crown,
So I came to England in the night
And I warred on Exeter town.

xxix

And the King came up with a mighty host
And what could I do but fly ? 115
I had three thousand men at the most,
And I was most loath to die.

xxx

And they took me and brought me to London town,
And I stood where all men might see;
I, that had well-nigh worn a crown, 120
In a shameful pillory !

xxxi

And I cried these words in the English tongue,
"I am Peter Warbecke,
From Katherine de Faro I am sprung
And my father was John Osbecke. 125

xxxii

" My father toiled and weaved with his hand,
And bare neither sword nor shield;
And the White Rose of fair England
Turned red on Bosworth field."

xxxiii

And they gave me my life, but they held me fast 130
Within this weary place.
But I wrought on my guards ere a month was past,
With my wit and my comely face.

xxxiv

And they were ready to set me free,
But when it was almost done, 135
And I thought I should gain the narrow sea
And look on the face of the sun,

xxxv

The lord of the tower had word of it,
And, alas ! for my poor hope,
For this is the end of my face and my wit 140
That to-morrow I die by the rope.

xxxvi

And the time draws nigh and the darkness closes,
And the night is almost done.
What had I to do with their roses,
I, the poor weaver's son ? 145

xxxvii

They promised me a bed so rich
And a queen to be my bride,
And I have gotten a narrow ditch
And a stake to pierce my side.

xxxviii

They promised me a kingly part 150
And a crown my head to deck,
And I have gotten the hangman's cart
And a hempen cord for my neck.

xxxix

Oh ! I would that I had never been born,
To splendour and shame and sorrow, 155
For it's ill riding to grim Tiborne,
Where I must ride to-morrow.

xli

I shall dress me all in silk and scarlet,
 And the hangman shall have my ring,
 For though I be hanged like a low-born varlet 160
 They shall know I was once a king.

xli

And may I not fall faint or sick
 Till I reach at last to the goal,
 And I pray that the rope may choke me quick
 And Christ receive my soul. 165

ALFRED DOUGLAS
Contemporary.

PERKIN WARBECK.

Here is almost a novel in minature. The account of a young pretender to gain the throne of England is a theme by no means foreign to the history-books of east and west, but to have an account of the attempt told to us by the chief actor in person is by no means so common. We might have had the story told us in the third person but thereby the author would have sacrificed some of his finest effect of pathos and verisimilitude. We are never once allowed to abandon our sympathy with the pathetic central figure of the ballad, and we are allowed to follow him from childhood, through youth, to pitiful death. The story is a tragic one, tragic because we have hints how splendid youth's purpose might have been served but for political exploitation and cunning.

Here is another poem beautiful to speak aloud with the infinite variety of the accents, and where again the tune exactly coincides with the sense.

FAIRYLAND.

If people came to know where my king's palace is,
it would vanish into air.

The walls are of white silver and the roof of shining
gold.

The queen lives in a palace with seven courtyards,
and she wears a jewel that cost all the wealth
of seven kingdoms.

But let me tell you, mother, in a whisper, where my
king's palace is.

It is at the corner of our terrace where the pot of
the *tulsi* plant stands. 5

The princess lies sleeping on the far away shore of
the seven impassable seas.

There is none in the world who can find her but
myself.

She has bracelets on her arms and pearl drops in
her ears: her hair sweeps down upon the floor.

She will wake when I touch her with my magic
wand, and jewels will fall from her lips when
she smiles.

But let me whisper in your ear, mother; she is there
in the corner of our terrace where the pot of the
tulsi plant stands. 10

When it is time for you to go to the river for your bath, step up to that terrace on the roof.

I sit in the corner where the shadows of the walls meet together.

Only puss is allowed to come with me, for she knows where the barber in the story lives.

But let me whisper, mother, in your ear where the barber in the story lives.

It is at the corner of the terrace where the pot of the *tulsi* plant stands. 15

RABINDRANATH TAGORE
Contemporary.

FAIRYLAND.

A charming poem by the poet of Bengal illustrating how splendid and beautiful are the kingdoms of a child's mind. Often parents are unheeding of the amazing richness and eagerness of child visions, forgetting that where there is no vision the people perish.

We are reminded in Tagore's treatment of the rhythms of Whitman, but we have in this poem a greater regularity, and we have too the refrain: "at the corner of our terrace where the pot of the *tulsi* plant stands." *There* is the kingdom of romance, of escape, the magic spot where at a wave of the hand shall come the gods and the fighting men, the princes and the queens, and above all, the barber in the story who knows everything—as they always do—and to whom nothing can be strange.

SHELLEY'S SKYLARK.

(The Neighbourhood of Leghorn: March, 1887).

Somewhere afield here something lies
In Earth's oblivious eyeless trust
That moved a poet to prophecies—
A pinch of unseen, unguarded dust:

The dust of the lark that Shelley heard,
And made immortal through times to be;—
Though it only lived like another bird,
And knew not its immortality !

Lived its meek life; then, one day, fell—
A little ball of feather and bone;
And how it perished, when piped farewell,
And where it wastes, are alike unknown.

Maybe it rests in the loam I view,
Maybe it throbs in a myrtle's green,
Maybe it sleeps in the coming hue
Of a grape on the slopes of yon inland scene.

Go find it, faeries, go and find
That tiny pinch of priceless dust,
And bring a casket silver-lined,
And framed of gold that gems encrust;

And we will lay it safe therein,
And consecrate it to endless time;
For it inspired a bard to win
Ecstatic heights in thought and rhyme.

THOMAS HARDY
1840—1929.

SHELLEY'S SKYLARK.

Thomas Hardy has made himself a reputation as a poet late in life. As a novelist he was already among the great Victorians, and then suddenly in the 20th century he springs again to life as a poet of the Georgians.

It is a fine thought that moves the poet to this apostrophe of the bird already immortalised by Shelley, the thought that 'a pinch of unseen unguarded dust' above all may sleep in the coming hue of a grape. Dust so priceless must this be that only the fairies themselves are worthy to minister to its safety.

THE GOLDEN JOURNEY TO SAMARKAND

PROLOGUE.

We who with songs beguile your pilgrimage
And swear that Beauty lives though lilies die,
We Poets of the proud old lineage
Who sing to find your hearts, we know not why,—

What shall we tell you ? Tales, marvellous tales 5
Of ships and stars and isles where good men rest,
Where nevermore the rose of sunset pales,
And winds and shadows fall toward the West:

And there the world's first huge white-bearded kings
In the dim glades sleeping, murmur in their
sleep, 10
And closer round their breasts the ivy clings,
Cutting its pathway slow and red and deep.

II

And how beguile you ? Death has no repose
Warmer and deeper than that Orient sand
Which hides the beauty and bright faith of those 15
Who made the Golden Journey to Samarkand.

And now they wait and whiten peaceably,
Those conquerors, those poets, those so fair:
They know time comes, not only you and I, . . .
But the whole world shall whiten, here or
there; 20

When those long caravans that cross the plain
With dauntless feet and sound of silver bells
Put forth no more for glory or for gain,
Take no more solace from the palm-girt wells,

When the great markets by the sea shut fast 25
All that calm Sunday that goes on and on:
Where even lovers find their peace at last,
And Earth is but a star, that once had shone.

EPILOGUE.

EPILOGUE.

At the Gate of the Sun, Bagdad, in olden time.

The Merchants (together).

Away, for we are ready to a man !

Our camels sniff the evening and are glad.

Lead on, O Master of the Caravan :

Lead on the Merchant-Princes of Bagdad.

The Chief Draper.

Have we not Indian carpets dark as wine, 5

Turbans and sashes, gowns and bows and veils,
And broideries of intricate design,

And printed hangings in enormous bales ?

The Chief Grocer.

We have rose-candy, we have spikenard,

Mastic and terebinth and oil and spice, 10

And such sweet jams meticulously jarred

As God's own Prophet eats in Paradise.

Line

10. mastic and terebinth—mastic a species of fragrant
smelling gum. Terebinth—the turpentine tree.

The Principal Jews.

And we have manuscripts in peacock styles
 By Ali of Damascus; we have swords
 Engraved with storks and apes and crocodiles, 15
 And heavy beaten necklaces, for the Lords.

The Master of the Caravan.

But you are nothing but a lot of Jews.

The Principal Jews.

Sir, even dogs have daylight, and we pay.

The Master of the Caravan.

But who are ye in rags and rotten shoes,
 You dirty-bearded, blocking up the way ? 20

The Pilgrims.

We are the Pilgrims, master. we shall go e
Always a little further: it may be
 Beyond that last blue mountain barred with snow,
 Across that angry or that glimmering sea,

White on a throne or guarded in a cave 25
 There lives a prophet who can understand .
 Why men were born: but surely we are brave,
 Who make the golden Journey to Samarkand.

The Chief Merchant.

•We gnaw the nail of hurry. Master, away !

One of the women.

O turn your eyes to where your children stand. 30
Is not Bagdad the beautiful ? O stay !

The Merchants (in chorus).

We take the Golden Road to Samarkand.
A Pilgrim With A Beautiful Voice
Sweet to ride forth at evening from the wells
When shadows pass gigantic on the sand,
And softly through the silence beat the bells 35
Along the Golden Road to Samarkand.

A Merchant.

We travel not for trafficking alone:
By hotter winds our fiery hearts are fanned:
For lust of knowing what should not be known
We make the Golden Journey to Samarkand. 40

The Masters of the Caravan.

Open the gate, O watchman of the night !

The Watchman.

Ho, travellers, I open. For what land
Leave you the dim-moon city of delight ?

The Merchants (with a shout).

We make the Golden Journey to Samarkand;

(The Caravan passes through the gate)

The Watchman (consoling the women)

What would ye, ladies ? It was ever thus, 45

Men are unwise and curiously planned.

A Woman.

They have their dreams, and do not think of us.

Voices of The Caravan (in the distance, singing)

We make the Golden Journey to Samarkand.

JAMES ELROY FLECKER
1884—1915

THE GOLDEN JOURNEY TO SAMARKAND.

We have a poem in *The Golden Journey* that is steeped in Eastern influence. To the imagination of the West the East has always acted like a spell, being the allure for the search after marvellous adventures, strange and rare encounter, while over all hangs an atmosphere of moonlight and marble palaces, groves of blossom-laden trees where glide enchanted maidens of the sun, or where the muezzin's voice piercing the rose of sunset brings true believes to a knowledge of the one great simplicity, to purify and make them one with the surpassing beauty of the eastern dusk. Other pictures too—a thousandfold: the desert and the camel, with the hawk-faced rider, and over all the movement of the caravan, and the rhythmic movement of its bells. For these are of the kingdoms of beauty and the earth beautiful.

As a child Flecker must have known such visions, have pondered quietly and at length until in his mind's eye they all grew more real than reality. But out of it all was born a steadfast purpose—to know more of the peoples of those Eastern lands, of their life and of their lore. At Cambridge the young Flecker—looking already like an Easterner—became engrossed in Oriental studies, Persian, and Arabic. But he was not lost in a fog of language and grammatical subtleties but searched for the jewels and riches he felt must be there until he found what he sought and unearthed:—

From the years and the sands
Some image with beautiful hands.

Till at last we were able to see a scholar who knew—‘what we want him to know,’ and converting all his knowledge into beauty.

Flecker’s power over words is remarkable, he can work a pure word-magic, and his notion of poetry is *to enchant*. Is he not speaking for himself and his fellow-poets in the Prologue ?

We who with songs beguile your pilgrimage
 And swear that Beauty lives though lilies die,
 We Poets of the proud old lineage,
 Who sing to find your hearts, we know not why—

There is his purpose stated—‘to find our hearts’ but always through the awakening of beauty. In the history of French influence in English literature no study would be complete without mention of ‘the name of James Elroy Flecker. He was influenced by a group of young French poets whose aim it was to stiffen up the excessive looseness and freedom of the great French Romantics. It was their greatest desire to express the subtlest ideas in powerful and simple verse, and always in writing poetry to create beauty, the method employed being analogous to the craftsman in precious stones. This group called themselves Parnassian, because their creed was classical in its insistence on the discipline of *form*, as in the Latin and Greek poets.

Another influence Flecker met with in the course of his studies was that of Richard Burton the famous translator of *The Arabian Nights*, who was sufficiently acquainted with Indian dialects as to frequent the bazaars

f Lahore and Peshawar without detection, and to make the Haj.

As a boy Flecker had copied out the whole of Burton's long 'Qasidah' which, English in words, was Persian in form. Flecker's knowledge of it has been so happy that it has been suggested that an infusion of Persian and Arabic forms into English verse might well serve as a new fertilizing agent.

A BALLAD OF TIME.

Toccatas, sweetest minuettes,
The songs his sister had,
The son next door played oft at eve,
When I was a small lad.

Then from my window I would watch
A dim old panelled room;
The mother in the window-seat
Where hyacinths would bloom.

She wore a cap of Irish lace,
And cuffs as white as snow;
The withered fingers, curning still,
Flashed needles to and fro.

And oft she'd nod, as one well pleased
With that upon her knee.

Then I would hear an old man say—
“Bert, once again, for me !”

More often though, the three I'd see
Move in their garden's peace:
The old man, and the young, the first
Glad day of Spring's release.

5

10

15

20

Line

1. Toccatas—a short lively musical composition.
Minuette—a court-dance to which was written a sweet stately music.

Then in the sun they'd lurk an hour
 To tell the promised year:
 And how the daffys soon would bloom;
 How mother might sit here,

And see them pot geraniums,
 And bring the fuchias out—
 But here the maid's step on the flags
 Stole what the rest was about.

Yet when the summer came at last,
 As'oft it was my way,
 I stole up to my window-seat
 To view the close of day;

And see how sweet their garden's bloom,
 How good their jasmine's smell,
 That minded me of wondrous isles
 Arabian stories tell.

And then the garden's peace below
 Grew rich with all those three;
 And Bert had his rose watering-can,
 And did all carefully,

As when he touched his minuetties,
 Or played "In Old Madrid,"
 Or any songs lost Linda loved—
 He playing as she bid.

25

30

35

40

Line

27. flags—large flat stones.

But oft I'd wonder from my nook
 Which flower most cherished one
 Within that garden blessed by all,
 Most tended by the son.

45

And after many years I knew
 That creeping jasmine flower
 Tha clung about the blackened wall,
 Most loved in lover's power.

50

It was the old man loved it most;
 He'd planted it one day
 When in the splendid belfry near
 They'd rung to tell the way

55

Of royal birthdays, and the health
 For all loyal men to drink:
 And so the golden past he'd muse,
 And with the present link.

60

Yet all this from my window, I,
 Had viewed with humble mind,
 That blessed those humble pleasures there,
 Of old folk meek and kind.

But came a day, I'd climbed the stair,
 And strangers walked the close:
 All trodden and dishevelled were
 The violet and the rose.

65

I had no music then to hear
 , From son, or from the maid:
 The owner of the garden had
 Within the grave been laid.

70

And some months later echoed where
 The minuettes had moved,
 The roughened jests that sped the goods
 Those aged folk had loved.

75

And that was at the winters end,
 But now in summer heat
 The thud of blows has drawn me up
 Again to my window-seat

80

I learn, what in my heart I dreamed—
 The jasmine is no more:
 For now, rude men hew at the wall
 Where it hung close before.

Anonymous.

A BALLAD OF TIME

A poem written under the influence of Wordsworth as is evident from the diction of simplicity it has inherited in such a stanza as.

Yet all this from my window, I,
 Had viewed with humble mind,
 That b'essed those humble pleasures there,
 Of old folk meek and kind.

We have the impression that a child looks down upon the little tragedy the jeans unfold before his eyes, and it is the very vocabulary that helps us to this illusion and the absence of all decoration convinces us of its heartfelt sincerity.

The manner of narration should be compared carefully with the other narrative poems in the book. The aim of the Wordsworth school of poetry was to treat of a familiar experience in familiar language, thereby gaining absolute sincerity. Here is a poet re-establishing the claim, with what amount of success you can only try to discover by turning up the simplest of the Wordsworth lyrical ballads.

